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# A performance guide to Lori Laitman's Living in the Body

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A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO LORI LAITMAN'S *LIVING IN THE BODY*

A Written Document

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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requirements for the degree of  
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in

The School of Music

by  
Kathryn Mary Drake  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this document is to provide a complete performer's guide to American composer Lori Laitman's *Living in the Body*, a song cycle consisting of six songs for soprano and saxophone set to the poetry of Joyce Sutphen.

*Living in the Body* is one of very few cycles written for soprano and saxophone, and the combination is both unusual and interesting to investigate. The cycle explores letting go of the past and focusing on what will happen in the second half of life. The text is set expertly for soprano, bringing important words to the listener's attention while keeping the melody in a range that allows the singer to be understood. The E-flat alto saxophone adds to the rather bleak texture, creating a distinct atmosphere of nostalgia and often creating musical imagery to further describe the meaning of the text.

This document contains information about the life and works of composer Lori Laitman and poet Joyce Sutphen. The cycle itself is explored, including the commission, premiere, compositional process, and general performance issues. An analysis of each poem and song in the *Living in the Body* is provided, as well as performance suggestions for each piece. Appendices with transcripts of interviews with composer, poet, and the two performers that premiered the cycle, are also included.



## INTRODUCTION

Lori Laitman calls herself “the accidental song composer.” She wrote for film and theater until 1991, when a singer friend of Laitman’s won the Concert Artists Guild Competition and asked her to write a song for her debut CD. Laitman has written almost solely for the voice since then, with over 200 songs, 2 operas, and an oratorio. She has quickly moved to the top of her profession, and is known for composing neo-Romantic, lyrical melodies with flexible harmonies and varying meters to a wide range of poets, living and non-living.

In this cycle, *Living in the Body*, Laitman sets the poetry of Joyce Sutphen, a living American poet and English professor at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. Dr. Sutphen has published four books of poetry to date, and is currently writing a new collection. Her words are both passionate and accessible, and have been set by other great American composers. Sutphen communicated with Laitman throughout her compositional process, and was pleased with the result.

The purpose of this document is to provide a complete performer’s guide to American composer Lori Laitman’s *Living in the Body*, a song cycle consisting of six songs for soprano or mezzo soprano and saxophone using the poetry of Joyce Sutphen.

*Living in the Body* is one of very few cycles written for soprano and saxophone, and the combination is both unusual and interesting to investigate. The cycle explores letting go of the past and focusing on what will happen in the second half of life. The text is set expertly for soprano, bringing important words to the listener’s attention while keeping the melody in a range that allows the singer to be understood. The E-flat alto saxophone adds to the rather bleak texture, creating a distinct atmosphere of nostalgia and often creating musical imagery to further describe the meaning of the text.

Chapter One discusses Lori Laitman's life, school, career, and works, also delving into what makes up her unique musical personality. Poet Joyce Sutphen's life and works are explored in Chapter Two. Chapter Three provides information about the cycle itself, including the commission, premiere, Laitman's compositional process, and general performance issues. Poetic and musical connections are highlighted, and an analysis of each poem and song in the *Living in the Body* is provided, including performance suggestions for each piece. Musical examples are used to enhance explanations, showing motivic ideas, musical imagery, and specifics concerning the performance of each song in the cycle.

## CHAPTER 1

### LORI LAITMAN'S LIFE AND WORKS

#### **Biographical Information**

Lori Laitman was born on January 12, 1955 into a musical family in Long Beach, NY. Her mother was a singer, pianist, and violinist, and her two older sisters were musicians as well. Her father, though not a musician himself, was a ~~—~~great appreciator.”<sup>1</sup> Laitman’s maternal grandmother’s maiden name was Cantor, and family history denotes that she was preceded by a long line of Jewish cantors: Laitman believes ~~—the~~ is definitely a genetic component at work here.”<sup>2</sup>

Laitman has early memories of her mother singing. Laitman’s mother studied voice in school but was not a professional singer. Family gatherings often involved music making, from classical to jazz.<sup>3</sup> With both a musical and supportive family, it seemed natural for a young Lori to begin piano lessons at age five. Flute lessons followed at age seven. In the hopes of becoming a professional flutist, at age nine she began to study with the principal flutist of the New York Philharmonic. Her parents even bought her a top quality Hanes flute in support of her musical endeavors.<sup>4</sup>

Having skipped kindergarten and twelfth grade, Laitman began her studies at Yale at the young age of sixteen. During her sophomore year at Yale, inspired by many composer friends,

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Watt, ~~—An~~acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage: Kathleen Watt speaks with Composer Lori Laitman,” *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Serdar Ilban, ~~—Songs from the Ashes: An Examination of Three Holocaust-Themed Song Cycles by Lori Laitman,”~~ (DMA diss., University of Nevada at Las Vegas, 2008), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lucy Owen Hoyt, ~~—Becoming a Redwood: A Genealogy of Expression in Dana Gioia’s Poetry and Lori Laitman’s Song Cycle,”~~ (DMA diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Owen Hoyt, ~~—Music and Gender Expectations: The Historical Record of Women Composers and The Experience of Composer Lori Laitman,”~~ (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008), 13.

she began composing ragtime: ~~the~~ structure gave me an easy starting and finishing point.”<sup>5</sup>

Laitman graduated magna cum laude in music from Yale, and went on to receive her Master’s degree in Flute Performance there just one year later.

When given the choice after her sophomore year at Yale to study with Nadia Boulanger in France or attend Interlochen Music Camp in Michigan, Laitman chose the latter, where she studied flute performance as well as composition with George Wilson. She remembers being surprised at her selection as principal flutist, as Interlochen provided a rather competitive atmosphere:

~~I~~ think the other flutists might have been equally shocked. In retrospect, I believe my technique was way more advanced than my musicianship at the time.”<sup>6</sup>

It was at Interlochen that she met soprano Lauren Wagner, who would later prompt a turning point in Laitman’s career. The two found a church job together in nearby Traverse City: Laitman played the organ to Wagner’s singing.<sup>7</sup> Laitman wrote an ~~avant~~-garde” piece for Wagner that required her to make many strange sounds. She believes a recording exists of this piece, but she ~~will~~ be very content if it is never unearthed.”<sup>8</sup>

At Yale, Laitman studied flute with Thomas Nyfenger, and composition with Frank Lewin and Jonathan Kramer.<sup>9</sup> During these years, she wrote mostly instrumental music, and became interested in writing for film and theatre through a course taught by Frank Lewin. She

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<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Watt, —A ~~ma~~claimed art song composer takes the opera stage: Kathleen Watt speaks with Composer Lori Laitman,” *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Lori Laitman, —Unofficial Biography,” <http://www.artsongs.com> (accessed August 8, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Watt, —A ~~ma~~claimed art song composer takes the opera stage,” *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

did set one poem, Christina Rossetti's "Remember Me." After hearing a performance of the song, Robert Morris, a composition faculty member at the time, compared Laitman's style to that of Pierre Boulez. Laitman spoke of it many years later, saying that it should have been a hint that song composition could be her niche, but she continued to pursue film and theater music.<sup>10</sup>

After finishing her graduate studies in 1976, Laitman married her college boyfriend, double-bassist Bruce Rosenblum. She moved with him to Williamstown, Massachusetts, and the two of them comprised the music department at the Buxton School, a private high school. Laitman kept up her performing during this time, often traveling to Vermont to play flute in the Vermont Symphony.<sup>11</sup>

A year later, the couple made the move to New York City for Rosenblum to attend Columbia Law School. Laitman taught flute at several area music schools, and began to compose music for industrial films. She composed scores for the Dick Roberts Film Company, and claims that this training was important for the advancement of her compositional techniques. A limited number of musicians, due to small budgets, taught her to make the most of each instrument's color and capabilities.<sup>12</sup>

Rosenblum's job opportunities brought the couple to Boston, the Washington, D.C. area, and finally to Potomac, MD, where they now reside. Three children made their family complete: James, Diana, and Andrew, who Laitman calls her "three best creations."<sup>13</sup> Following in the

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<sup>10</sup> Lucy Owen Hoyt, "Becoming a Redwood," (DMA diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008), 12.

<sup>11</sup> Serdar Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes," (DMA diss., University of Nevada at Las Vegas, 2008), 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Watt, "An acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage," *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

footsteps of their parents, all three are musicians: James plays piano, Diana chose the cello, and Andrew has performed with his trumpet on Public Radio International's nationally broadcast radio show "From the Top," which aims at showcasing young musical talent. Laitman has written a piece for each of them, but claims that "unless they're going to start singing, or want to play the piano part to my songs, I'm really only writing for voice."<sup>14</sup> She does, however, value both her husband's and children's feedback about her work:

"Sharing a love of music with my children has been wonderful. They have always felt free to comment on my work, and often have given me great suggestions. They also continue to push me to grow. I try to create music that makes them proud of me. And by the way, I consider my songs (and other music) to be my "other" children."<sup>15</sup>

When Laitman transitioned into motherhood, priorities changed and time became sparse. She wanted to have both a family and a career, but working whenever she could find a moment was less than ideal for the short deadlines required for film scoring.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the 1980s, Laitman continued to write chamber music. She also collaborated often with her friend Miyuki Yoshikami, a koto player and fellow faculty member at The International School in Washington, D.C.<sup>17</sup> Laitman wrote several pieces for flute and koto, and continues to perform them with Yoshikami today.

Laitman's career took a turn in 1991, when her former roommate at Interlochen Arts Camp with whom she was still in relatively close contact, soprano Lauren Wagner, called her with a request: she had recently won the Concert Artists Guild competition and was preparing to

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<sup>14</sup> Watt, "An acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage," *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Lucy Owen Hoyt, "Music and Gender Expectations," (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008), 17.

<sup>17</sup> Serdar Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes," (DMA diss., University of Nevada at Las Vegas, 2008), 3.

make her debut CD, titled “American Song Recital.” Wagner wanted Laitman to compose some songs for the CD, and after conquering some initial self-doubt, Laitman agreed to do so.<sup>18</sup>

Laitman discovered and was drawn to the poetry of Sara Teasdale by searching at the library, and decided to set Teasdale’s “The Metropolitan Tower.” She composed the vocal line very quickly, and took more time with the accompaniment. Because of its simplistic and strophic nature, Laitman feared that the piece would not be accepted.<sup>19</sup>

“The Metropolitan Tower” premiered at Merkin Hall in New York on December 16, 1991. The well-known American art song composer Richard Hundley was in attendance, and approached Laitman at the after party. Hundley told her that he had been considering setting that very Teasdale poem but now he never would, because his could not be set better than Laitman’s. This was how Laitman “found her voice in writing for voice,”<sup>20</sup> and Laitman still considers “The Metropolitan Tower” one of her favorites of her compositions to date.<sup>21</sup>

Since changing her focus to writing for voice in 1991, Laitman has composed 205 songs, two operas, and an oratorio. She is one of the most performed living composers in America, and was chosen as the Nebraska Music Teachers Association Composer of the Year in 2002.<sup>22</sup>

Laitman’s works have been performed in venues such as The Kennedy Center, Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the U.S. Holocaust Museum, and the Cleveland Opera. Her growing discography includes releases on Naxos, Albany Records, Channel Classics, Gasparo,

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<sup>18</sup> Lori Laitman, “Unofficial Biography,” <http://www.artsongs.com> (accessed August 8, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Dormady Eisenberg, “From Art Song to Opera,” *Classical Singer* (October 2009), 43.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

and Capstone.<sup>23</sup> Laitman's work has been reviewed in the following prestigious journals: *NATS Journal of Singing*, *Gramophone*, *Opera News*, and *American Record Guide*. Complimentary reviews of Laitman's compositions can also be found in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Herald*, and *The Seattle Times*.<sup>24</sup>

Most recently, in addition to being listed on baritone Thomas Hampson's *Song of America* website<sup>25</sup> on his American song timeline, Laitman was recently the Featured Composer on the site. Her new song "The Act," for soprano, tenor, and piano to text by H.L. Hix, premiered at *Songfest 2010* at Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA. Laitman is currently working on a commission from Randolph College in Lynchburg, VA for her first stand-alone choral piece, and is looking forward to composing for choir.<sup>26</sup>

## **Works**

Laitman has composed 205 songs to date. As she has found her passion in song writing, the majority of Laitman's works have been written for voice and one other instrument. Laitman combines voice with piano for many song cycles; however, she also explores a less common partnership: writing for the voice with accompaniments such as saxophone, trumpet, and cello. Many of her works are published in several different versions: whether it be adding a voice, changing a key, or switching the accompanying instrument, Laitman claims that timbres are not as important in her compositions as the text, melody, and harmony.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Laki, "On Songwriting: An interview with composer Lori Laitman," *Lyrica* 29 (Fall 2007), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Lori Laitman, "Reviews," <http://www.artsongs.com/meet/reviews> (accessed August 24, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Hampson, *Song of America* website, <http://www.songofamerica.net> (accessed August 24, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Laki, "On Songwriting," *Lyrica* 29 (Fall 2007), 6.



Her exploration of these less common partnerships, specifically the voice and saxophone, stemmed from personal friendships. Laitman was uncertain that the combination would work without the support of the piano, but was interested in her friends Gary Louie (saxophonist) and Lauren Wagner (soprano) meeting and making music together. “Never Saw Another Butterfly,” Laitman’s first work for voice and saxophone, was created for these two musicians.<sup>28</sup>

Several challenges also arise from these unique instrumental combinations. It proves to be more difficult to preserve a sense of rhythmic stability. Laitman has learned to address this issue over the years by keeping a more constant meter so that the rhythmic stability is apparent to the listener. Another challenge Laitman faces is composing for instruments that she does not play:

“When writing for an instrument that you don’t play, it’s always good to consult with a player to make sure everything can work. So, in that way, using piano or flute for my songs is easier as I know how to play these instruments. Basically, however, it’s always the same challenge: what can I do with the accompaniment to add another layer of interpretation to the text?”<sup>29</sup>

Laitman has chosen a wide variety of poetry to set. Whether the poet is living, dead, popular, or obscure, each of her settings has its own “flavor.”<sup>30</sup> Since her first setting of Teasdale’s “The Metropolitan Tower,” Laitman has composed the varied styles of Emily Dickinson, Mary Oliver, Thomas Lux, Dana Gioia, Christina Rossetti, Elinor Wylie, and Joyce Kilmer. With regard to working with living poets, Laitman appreciates being able to ask them questions if need be. Every once in a while, she will ask the poet for a word change. Her poets

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<sup>28</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Watt, “An acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage,” *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

have been seemingly pleased with Laitman's settings, as her music can reveal new ideas about the poem. This in turn happens when the performers interpret Laitman's music.<sup>31</sup>

Among Laitman's most recent song compositions is her first dual language setting piece. She wrote English and German versions of Paul Celan's "Todesfuge" for baritone Wolfgang Holzmair; the English version uses a translation by John Felstiner. The song was finished in August of 2010 with cello accompaniment. While the settings are similar, Laitman found that composing a different melody to fit with the grammar structure was necessary in some instances. She enjoyed the dual language process, and is anxious to compose for other international singers in the same way.<sup>32</sup>

Another song cycle in progress is a set of Emily Dickinson poems for her mother's birthday and parents' 71st wedding anniversary. So far, the set contains "Some Keep the Sabbath" (2009) and "I Stepped From Plank to Plank" (2010), with two more drafts to complete the set in the making. While Laitman credits her mother's singing throughout her childhood as part of innate ability to write for the voice, she usually does not intend for her mother to sing the pieces she creates. "I Stepped From Plank to Plank," however, was specifically composed for her mother's 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday; Laitman kept the melody within a limited range so that her mother could sing it with relative ease.<sup>33</sup>

Laitman classifies her body of works into two categories: Holocaust music and non-Holocaust music.<sup>34</sup> To date she has written five Holocaust-related cycles. Her newest addition

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Watt, "An acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage," *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

to her Holocaust works is *Vedem*, a Holocaust oratorio with a song cycle component of the same title. It is composed to a libretto by David Mason that is juxtaposed with original poetry that was published secretly by boys living in the Terezin Concentration Camp, located northwest of Prague.<sup>35</sup>

Laitman is particularly drawn to Holocaust because of her Jewish background: her father was one of three Jewish people that graduated from the West Point class of 1939. Although she is not religious, she feels that by being Jewish, a mother, and a human being, she holds a certain responsibility to set these writings to music. Laitman is stimulated by the sadness of the poetry, and feels that by setting it to music she can honor all Holocaust victims.<sup>36</sup>

As Laitman refers to her songs as “baby operas,”<sup>37</sup> it would seem natural for her to explore opera composition. She was aided by David Bamberger of Cleveland Opera in this transition. Bamberger, co-founder and general director of Cleveland Opera at the time, sent Laitman an e-mail speaking of his upcoming commemoration program for what would have been Anne Frank’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. He had heard of Laitman’s Holocaust cycle *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, but had not yet heard her music. She eagerly sent him recordings, and he was so pleased that he wove fifteen of Laitman’s Holocaust-themed songs together to form an opera. Laitman’s *Come to Me in Dreams* premiered at Cleveland Opera in June of 2004.<sup>38</sup>

In November of 2008, Laitman’s next opera had its premiere: she was commissioned to compose an opera for the University of Central Arkansas. Robert Holden, a baritone on the

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<sup>35</sup> Lori Laitman, “Full Works List,” <http://www.artsongs.com> (accessed August 10, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Watt, —A acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage,” *USOperaweb* (2004), <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

music faculty there, approached Laitman at a song festival and asked if she would write an opera for UCA. Laitman got in touch with a poet she had set before, David Mason, and two years later had composed *The Scarlet Letter*, based off of Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic tale.<sup>39</sup> The opera was well received, and Laitman is currently awaiting funding for her next opera collaboration with the librettist which will be based on his novel *Ludlow*.

### Compositional Characteristics

When Laitman was studying composition at Yale in the 1970s, beautiful music was not in style. If it was beautiful, it was not progressive enough. During this time, Laitman felt almost ashamed of the lyric quality of her music. Now, however, Laitman believes that composers ought to write as they please.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps she feels less bound by the scrutiny the college-aged musician experiences from teachers and colleagues; or it could be that Laitman's maturity and success are involved. Either way, Laitman admits to liking some of her "pretty" songs the best, such as her Dickinson setting of "If I . . ." and Teasdale's "The Metropolitan Tower."<sup>41</sup>

Laitman's unique musical personality is characterized by a lyrical vocal line, flexible and supportive accompaniments and meters, and use of a wide range of poets with different musical responses to each one. She utilizes key changes that are unpredictable yet still transition smoothly, and her meters shift easily with the text.<sup>42</sup> Word painting is used frequently to illuminate the meaning of the text.

Laitman uses dissonance, large intervals, and post-modern harmonies to call attention to emotional climaxes. Motivic and rhythmic devices are found throughout her cycles, unifying the

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<sup>39</sup> Eisenberg, "From Art Song to Opera," *Classical Singer* (October 2009), 43.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Lucy Owen Hoyt, "Music and Gender Expectations," (UNC Greensboro, 2008), 22.

<sup>42</sup> Carol Lines, "The Songs of Lori Laitman," *Journal of Singing* 64, No. 1 (September/October 2007): 32.

song or cycle. Her songs rarely begin and end in the same key, and the tonal center often wanders throughout.<sup>43</sup>

Laitman's suggestions are notated throughout her works in a unique way: she utilizes a mixture of traditional Italian musical suggestions such as —*poco rit.*” with more casual markings such as —slow *bit*” and —somewhat mysterious.” For her, musical notation as we know it today is incapable of explaining to the performer exactly what she wants:

—use whatever I can to try to explain myself to the performers. Since I'm American and speak English, English just seems to work better in many instances. My job is to get the music out of my head and onto the paper in the best way possible so that the performers can take it off the paper and get it back into the air. Over the years, I have learned to be as specific as possible.”<sup>44</sup>

Due to the lyrical quality of her melodies, Laitman's music has been classified as Neo-Romantic. Her compositional style has been compared with that of Samuel Barber, Richard Strauss, and Ned Rorem.<sup>45</sup> Her works have also been likened to those of Richard Hundley, John Adams, and William Bolcom.<sup>46</sup>

While she admires many composers and musicians, Laitman is not convinced that they have had a direct influence on her own music, as her approach to composing is very individual. This being said, Laitman appreciates and is inspired by an array of music, classical and otherwise. Some composers that Laitman lists as her favorites include Mozart, Bach, Barber, Britten, Schubert, Schumann, Puccini, Verdi, and Debussy.<sup>47</sup> Laitman especially enjoys

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Lines, —The Songs of Lori Laitman,” *Journal of Singing* 64, No. 1 (September/October 2007): 32.

<sup>46</sup> Watt, —A acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage,” <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Serdar Ilban, —Songs from the Ashes,” (DMA diss., University of Nevada at Las Vegas, 2008), 6.

Mahler's works, as she is attracted to his melodies and orchestrations. She is also intrigued by Wagner's operas and how the music serves the text: Laitman has called Wagner's *Die Walküre* a "huge art song."<sup>48</sup> Israeli composer Ofer Ben-Amots is also a favorite of hers, as his music contains elements of Klezmer melodies to which Laitman's ear is particularly attracted.<sup>49</sup>

Art song composers that have inspired Laitman include Paul Bowles, Richard Hundley, and most recently, Rebecca Clarke. Her first song, "The Metropolitan Tower," was in part influenced by Bowles' "Secret Words." Both pieces possess a similar lyrical quality while gracefully fusing the text with the music. Laitman admires Hundley's suitable text settings, and was grateful for his encouragement early in her career.<sup>50</sup>

Having recently discovered the songs of Rebecca Clarke, Laitman lists her as a current favorite. Clarke was a violist and composer whose music was known for its passion and power. She composed over 100 works but only seeing 20 of those published during her lifetime (1886-1979): 53 of her songs are published today.<sup>51</sup>

Laitman's musical interests extend beyond the classical realm. As she finds classical music to be a distraction while driving, she instead chooses pop as her background music of choice. She loves the close harmonies of Girlyman, while also enjoying James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Carole King, Huey Lewis, and Bonnie Raitt. Her current favorite is Natalie Merchant's

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<sup>48</sup> Rebecca Geihlsler, "Pedagogical Study of Selected Vocal Works for the Soprano Voice," (DMA diss., University of Mississippi, 2008, 24.

<sup>49</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Geihlsler, "Pedagogical Study," (DMA diss., University of Mississippi, 2008, 24.

<sup>51</sup> The Official Website of The Rebecca Clarke Society, <http://www.rebeccaclarke.org>, accessed September 11, 2010.

song “The Dancing Bear,” from her album *Leave Your Sleep*. Its melodic construction and Klezmer-like qualities are particularly enchanting to Laitman.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, Laitman lists her teachers at Yale as perhaps her most important influences. Jonathan Kramer taught her to keep her compositions interesting and to give the melody shape.<sup>53</sup> Frank Lewin was Laitman’s main mentor in graduate school: he taught a film and theatre class. From him, she learned to be ultra sensitive to moods in film and plays, and consequently to compose appropriate music for each mood.<sup>54</sup>

The first compositional priority for Laitman is the text. She states:

—As a composer, my primary goal is to create music that will illuminate the meanings of of a poem. Every aspect of every song that I write comes from a desire to serve the text. . . I always hope to create a complex web of ideas with all factors existing to serve the text.”<sup>55</sup>

As her goal is for the music to amplify the text, Laitman avoids poetry to which she does not hold an emotional connection.<sup>56</sup> She does, however, seek out poetry that leaves some gaps that could be filled in by her music. Laitman looks for beauty of language and interesting stories, without too complex a story. For example, while Laitman appreciates Emily Dickinson’s use of metaphor and emotional pull, she finds some of Dickinson’s poetry to be too complex; or in some cases, too sparse.<sup>57</sup> She avoids poems with too many homonyms as they can be confusing to the listener, but is drawn to poems about death, love, or any other deep experience.

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<sup>52</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Geihlsler, —“Pedagogical Study,” (DMA diss., University of Mississippi, 2008, 24.

<sup>54</sup> Eisenberg, —“From Art Song to Opera,” *Classical Singer* (October 2009), 43.

<sup>55</sup> Laki, —“On Songwriting,” *Lyrica* 29 (Fall 2007), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Geihlsler, —“Pedagogical Study,” (DMA diss., University of Mississippi, 2008, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Laki, —“On Songwriting,” *Lyrica* 29 (Fall 2007), 6.

Laitman claims that she does not seek out a certain type of poetry to set, but seeks out only content. She has many poets she is currently considering setting, including Diane Thiel, Jennifer Reeser, A.E. Stallings, Cornelius Eady, and Gene Jones.<sup>58</sup>

Since some of her poetic choices have been set many times in the past, it seems that the intimidation factor could come into play for Laitman as she made her way in the song world. However, this was not the case: when she began composing art song, she was simply unaware of how many times certain poets (Dickinson, for instance) had been set. Perhaps, had she been aware of this, she may have been intimidated. Conversely, Laitman finds that it doesn't matter what other composers have set, as her process is so unique. Each song is her own interpretation of the words.<sup>59</sup>

There is one song composer to whom Laitman feels a strong connection to with regards to setting poetry:

—The only composer I've ever heard that has set poems exactly as I would have is Gerald Finzi. When I listen to his songs, I understand exactly what he is doing, so I'm guessing his approach is similar to mine. The result seems to be similar to my ears."<sup>60</sup>

Laitman enjoys the concept of changing time when putting poetry to music, as it can have an effect on how the words are received.<sup>61</sup> By simply inserting an accelerando in the score, she can add to the excitement or anticipation of the story. If suspense should be portrayed, the music can slow down, or perhaps silence can be utilized.

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<sup>58</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Laki, "On Songwriting," *Lyrica* 29 (Fall 2007), 6



Due to her early compositional training in theatre and film, Laitman thinks of her songs as “little plays” or “little films.”<sup>62</sup> A keen sense of drama is ever present all of Laitman’s works:

“I realize that much of my ‘process’ stems from learning how to compose for film and theatre, in that I am seeking to create dramatic music to enhance the meaning of the words, in addition to trying to create a beautiful melody for singers to sing.”<sup>63</sup>

Laitman always begins her compositional process by setting the vocal line. She generally has an idea of the harmonic outline, but the melody is of utmost importance. Laitman’s melodic line serves to allow the singer to communicate the text with ease, highlighting especially significant words.<sup>64</sup>

### Compositional Process

The compositional process for Laitman varies with regards to time and manner. Sometimes ideas will come to her faster than she can write them down. In these cases, she often worries that the piece will not be great but assesses its worth later, often finding value in the piece after all.<sup>65</sup>

In general, Laitman deems herself a fairly quick composer, not counting the times when her life interferes with her work. However, early in her song composition days, she would often get an idea for the opening of a piece but it could take her months to continue with the rest of it. This was the case for her setting of “I’m Nobody” from *Four Dickinson Songs*. Now when she is having trouble continuing a piece, Laitman solves the problem by singing lines in many different ways until she finds the right melody.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Laki, “On Songwriting,” *Lyrical* 29 (Fall 2007), 6.

<sup>65</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Because Laitman was such an intuitive composer, she feels that her style formed in —the Metropolitan Tower” and has changed very little since. In her maturity, however, she states that she uses leitmotifs more so than when she first began, not only within her songs but also within her entire cycles:

—I view my songs as miniature operas, and these motives that unify the score often will take on some psychological importance to further express the meaning of the words or understanding of a particular character.”<sup>67</sup>

Her compositional process, however, has altered slightly. In Laitman’s beginning years of song composing, the vocal line had to be completed and perfect before she would begin the accompaniment. Now, she will sometimes work on both melody and accompaniment at the same time, or at least have an idea about what the accompaniment should be instead of just the harmonies. Laitman strives to create an accompaniment that adds another layer of interpretation to the text, using harmonies to accentuate and color the emotions behind the text.<sup>68</sup>

This being said, Laitman would prefer to have her music studied in images as opposed to theoretical analysis:

—My own eyes glaze over if I’m reading something theoretical about my songs! The liner notes are made for ‘regular’ people. I do them because the more you know about the songs, the more you can appreciate what’s in my songs. I want my music to speak to all people, and not just to singers.”<sup>69</sup>

Along with theory, timbre is one of the least important aspects of her composing. The melody and harmony create overall mood for the text, and while certain cycles are written for specific voice types and accompanying instruments, Laitman is open to transposing or adjusting

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Watt, —A acclaimed art song composer takes the opera stage,” <http://www.kewatt.com/LoriLaitman.html> (accessed August 12, 2010).

her cycles for different voice types and transcribing it for various instrument combinations.<sup>70</sup>

Many of her cycles are conveniently scored for different combinations and voice types.

Though her writing is very vocal, she is willing make adjustments within reason so that her singers stay happy and comfortable. For Laitman, the drama of the situation is central to the piece, but this drama can be illuminated in several different ways. Her sense of what works the best for a melody is equally strong as that of the overall melodic structure within a song.<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, even if Laitman changes a few notes to accommodate a singer, the drama and overall structure of a song can be upheld.

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<sup>70</sup> Laki, "On Songwriting," *Lyrica* 29 (Fall 2007), 6.

<sup>71</sup> Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

## CHAPTER 2

### JOYCE SUTPHEN'S LIFE AND WORKS

#### **Biographical Information**

Joyce Sutphen, born August 10, 1949, grew up on a farm with her six brothers and one sister in Stearns County, MN, near St. Joseph. She was raised Catholic, and attended Catholic schools for twelve years. As she came from an “extremely musical” family, Sutphen took piano lessons throughout her childhood and played alto saxophone in high school. She is an avid music lover to this day, and incorporates this into her body of works.<sup>72</sup>

With aspirations to be a writer early on, Sutphen wrote her first “novel” in the fifth grade: a cowboy melodrama.<sup>73</sup> Later, Sutphen was intrigued by the writings of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickinson. She adored the way the words sounded, and the rhythms and rhymes of the text.<sup>74</sup> Sutphen then attended the University of Minnesota in the late 60s to study literature.

After setting out on a “journey to find truth and beauty” after her undergraduate studies, Sutphen’s path led her back home to Minnesota.<sup>75</sup> She went back to the University of Minnesota, this time obtaining her PhD in English Literature and Renaissance Drama in 1996: her dissertation was entitled “Shakespeare and the Art of Memory.”

Currently, Sutphen teaches Literature and Creative Writing at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. While enjoying teaching, she continues to work on new poems and new collections of poetry. Sutphen also enjoys spending time with her three grown daughters:

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<sup>72</sup> Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Emilio and Monica De Grazia, *33 Minnesota Poets*, (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2000), 203.

<sup>75</sup> Joyce Sutphen, *Coming Back to the Body*, (Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press, 2000), 107.

—My youngest daughter writes songs and sings. My oldest daughter thinks that she and I should collaborate on a best-selling series! They are all three voracious readers.”<sup>76</sup>

## Career and Works

While Sutphen has always fostered a love for literature and writing, she was uncertain at first of her own career possibilities as a poet. While sitting in an art museum one day, Sutphen admitted her desire to write poetry to a Susan Yunza, a poet friend of hers and high school classmate whose works she admired. Yunza encouraged Sutphen, and more than twenty five years later she and Sutphen shared a poetry prize at the University of Minnesota.<sup>77</sup> Sutphen has found her calling, even if perhaps later in her life:

—If I could walk back in time, I would stop into my high school guidance office, and I would say: poet – that’s what I would like to be.”<sup>78</sup>

Sutphen’s first collection of poetry was published in 1995 by Beacon Press under the title *Straight Out of View*. Sutphen was in her 40s. Her published collections that followed include *Coming Back to the Body* in 2000, *Naming the Stars* in 2004, and *Fourteen Sonnets* in 2005.

*Fourteen Sonnets* features the drawings of Rachel Wren, and includes poems gathered from Sutphen’s previously published collections. Her affinity for sonnets stems in part from her dissertation work regarding Shakespeare and the art of memory. There are only 151 of these books in print, with some of them numbered and signed by Sutphen herself.<sup>79</sup>

Her most recent collection is *First Words*, published by Red Dragonfly Press in early 2010. The images on the book cover comprise old pictures of her family farm and picture of a farmhouse taken by Sutphen. The collection involves poetry inspired by Sutphen’s childhood

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<sup>76</sup> Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

<sup>77</sup> De Grazia, *33 Minnesota Poets*, (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2000), 196.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Joyce Sutphen, *Fourteen Sonnets* (Red Wing, MN: Red Dragonfly Press, 2005).

through her experiences with motherhood. The poems are centered around family life, ranging from nostalgic to light-hearted to lyric.

Joyce Sutphen's poems have also been published in a number of renowned literary journals including *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Minnesota Monthly*, *North Dakota Review*, *Art Word Quarterly*, *North Coast Review*, and *Minnesota English Journal* as well as many others. She appeared as a guest on *Prairie Home Companion* with Garrison Keillor in 1998, which was broadcast on Minnesota Public Radio.<sup>80</sup> Her poems —“Thing You Didn't Put on Your Resumé” and —“Apple Season” were read by Keillor on American Public Media's *The Writer's Almanac* in 2006 and 2009 respectively.

*Straight Out of View* was the winner of the Barnard New Women Poets Prize, published first by Beacon Press in 1995 and republished by Holy Cow! Press in 2001. Her next book of poetry, *Coming Back to the Body*, was a finalist for a Minnesota Book Award. *Naming the Stars*, however, won a Minnesota Book Award in 2004.<sup>81</sup>

She has received the Loft-McKnight Award and the Eunice Tietjens Memorial Prize for Poetry, given annually by *Poetry*. In addition, Sutphen was the recipient of a Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship and Career Opportunity Grant, a Salzburg Fellowship; and two Travel and Study Awards from the Jerome Foundation.<sup>82</sup>

Facets of Sutphen's life that have influenced her poetry include growing up in the country, having a large extended family, her sister's death, her three daughters, marriage and

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<sup>80</sup> Joyce Sutphen, *Coming Back to the Body* (Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press, 2000), 109.

<sup>81</sup> Joyce Sutphen, *First Words* (Red Wing, MN: Dragonfly Press, 2010), 96.

<sup>82</sup> Joyce Sutphen, *Naming the Stars* (Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press, 2004), 77.

divorce, aging, and the idea of mortality. When asked what other writers have inspired her, Sutphen listed many:

—That’s a hard one: so many! Shakespeare, Donne, Keats, Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Frost, Seamus Heaney, Linda Paston, Connie Wanek, Carl Dennis, W.S. Merwin, Ted Kooser, Blake, Whitman, Adam Zagajewski, Thomas Transtromer, Wislawa Szymborska . . . I could go on and on.”<sup>83</sup>

Sutphen describes her poetry as —lucid, passionate, accessible, and subtle.” Due to their often lyric quality, Sutphen’s works have not only been set by Laitman. Libby Larsen, Carol Jennings, Abbie Betinis, and Arthur Maud have done so as well.<sup>84</sup>

When Sutphen sits down to write, she often ends up with a different end result than the idea with which she began. She doesn’t always end up with a finished product; however, when she does finish a poem, it makes it a successful day despite any other failures. When Sutphen is truly inspired, hours go by, her coffee gets cold, and she can even forget to eat. She will continue to move, add, delete, and read her words repeatedly until her finished product is at its best.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Emilio and Monica De Grazia, *33 Minnesota Poets*, (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2000), 196.

## CHAPTER 3

### *LIVING IN THE BODY*

#### **Commission**

The cycle *Living in the Body* was commissioned and premiered by saxophonist Carolyn Bryan and soprano Sandra McClain. Dr. Carolyn Bryan is a member of the graduate faculty at Georgia Southern University where she is Associate Professor of Saxophone. She obtained her Doctorate and Master's degrees in saxophone literature and performance from Indiana University, and graduated *summa cum laude* from Baldwin-Wallace College with a Bachelor of Music Education. Bryan has studied with Eugene Rousseau, Daniel Deffayet, and Galan Kral.<sup>86</sup>

Bryan's research centers on developmental literature for the saxophone and music composed by women. In fact, she got to know Laitman's work through her doctoral research. Her dissertation was written on works for voice and saxophone, and when Bryan put out a general call for works, Laitman answered with information about her *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* cycle.<sup>87</sup>

Dr. Sandra McClain is Artist in Residence and Coordinator of Graduate Studies in Music at Florida Atlantic University, where she teaches voice and diction as well as graduate research and music history classes. She holds a Doctor of Education from Teachers College at Columbia University, a Master's of Music from Manhattan School of Music, and a Bachelor of Arts from Meredith College. McClain has performed on both the opera and concert stages throughout the eastern United States, singing roles with Universal Opera, Pennsylvania Opera Theatre, Brooklyn Opera Society, Lake George Opera, and the New York Opera Ensemble. Her

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<sup>86</sup> —About Dr. Bryan," Georgia Southern University Official Website, [http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/music/FacultyandStaff/container\\_bryan.php](http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/music/FacultyandStaff/container_bryan.php) (accessed September 9, 2010).

<sup>87</sup> Carolyn Bryan, phone interview with the author, September 9, 2010.



recording *Love's Seasons*," a collection of American art songs performed with accompanist Margo Garrett, is available under the Musicians Showcase Recordings label. She is a sought after master class clinician and a member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing.<sup>88</sup>

Bryan and McClain met when both were faculty at Georgia Southern University, and became great friends and musical collaborators. The two women formed *The Arden Duo* in 1998, stemming from their desire to perform Laitman's first work for voice and saxophone, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (1996). As *The Arden Duo*, Bryan and McClain have commissioned and performed new works for voice and saxophone. They have performed at the World Saxophone Congress, the Festival of Women Composers International, and meetings of the North American Saxophone Alliance. They have also made appearances on "A Celebration of Women in Music" at Mary Baldwin College and "Weavings of War" at Florida Atlantic University.<sup>89</sup>

Composers that have written works for *The Arden Duo* in addition to Laitman include Carolyn Jennings, Randall Reese, Bill Schmid, and Stuart Glazer. Their most recent commission is a cycle of three songs based on the poetry of Holocaust survivors entitled *Voices from the Holocaust*, written by Dr. Stuart Glazer, a colleague of McClain's at Florida Atlantic University. They were premiered at the North American Saxophone Alliance, held at the University of Georgia in March 2010. The international premiere of the event took place in November 2010 at Florida Atlantic University as part of the conference "Lessons and Legacies of the Holocaust."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> "Faculty Biography," Florida Atlantic University Official Website, [http://www.fau.edu/music/hp\\_mcclain\\_s.php](http://www.fau.edu/music/hp_mcclain_s.php) (accessed September 9, 2010).

<sup>89</sup> Sandra McClain, e-mail interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

With their *Arden Duo* partnership, the two received a Special Initiative Grant from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at Georgia Southern University. This funding would make the commission of the cycle possible, and facilitate Laitman's residency at Georgia Southern and travel to the premiere.<sup>91</sup> Next, Bryan approached Laitman to discuss the new cycle; thus began Laitman's compositional journey.

### **Laitman's Compositional Process**

—I was being commissioned to write specifically for voice and saxophone, so I did not consider any other combinations. It was nice to create another set for the same instruments as my *Butterfly* cycle but with the subject matter being so completely different. Perhaps because of my flute background, I find it relatively easy to compose for saxophone."<sup>92</sup>

Carolyn Bryan requested first that her friend Joyce Sutphen's poetry be used for the commission. Bryan and Sutphen met when both were visiting lecturers at Gustavus Adolphus College. Bryan fulfilled her year-long replacement appointment only, while Sutphen moved into a tenure track position.

Although the two women have not remained in close touch, Bryan greatly admired Sutphen's work, prompting her to contact Sutphen about using her poetry for a song cycle.<sup>93</sup> Laitman was unfamiliar with Sutphen's work, but quickly became an enthusiast. McClain was previously unaware of Sutphen's poetry as well, but came to love it, stating, —Joyce is a wonderful, warm human being and her poetry reflects that."<sup>94</sup>

Laitman chose the six poems from Sutphen's various collections and titled the cycle *Living in the Body*; this is also the title of the second song in the cycle. She found that poem, and

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<sup>91</sup> Carolyn Bryan, phone interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

<sup>92</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>93</sup> Carolyn Bryan, phone interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

<sup>94</sup> Sandra McClain, e-mail interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

more specifically the phrase “living in the body” to be the most intriguing throughout the six poems she chose to set. While the Bryan and McClain were not particularly fond of this title at first, Laitman found it to be the most distinctive.<sup>95</sup>

It took Laitman a little less than three months to compose *Living in the Body*. She began the cycle on September 14, 2001 and finished it on December 3 of the same year. Laitman wrote from her home in Potomac, Maryland. She considers the time it took her to set *Living in the Body* to be average for the amount of material it contains.<sup>96</sup>

### **Interaction with Sutphen**

Laitman grouped together six of Sutphen’s poems on her own. While “Burning the Woods of My Childhood,” “Living in the Body,” and “Crossroads” (the first, second, and last songs in the cycle respectively) are published in Sutphen’s first collection, *Straight Out of View*; “Not for Burning” and “Lost at Table” (the third and fourth songs) are found in her second collection, *Coming Back to the Body*. The fifth song uses Sutphen’s unpublished poem “Bring on the Rain.”

Feeling especially drawn to “Burning the Woods of My Childhood” and “Living in the Body,” Laitman chose those texts to begin her cycle. Only after beginning work on the first piece was the decision made as to what poem would follow, as creating a dramatic flow throughout her cycles is important to Laitman<sup>97</sup>. Although the poems were taken from various places in her collections, Sutphen feels that the poems go together well in the cycle.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

While composing the cycle, Laitman called Sutphen to introduce herself. The two spoke on the phone several times. They did not meet in person until the premiere of the cycle in 2002; since then, they have kept in touch. Laitman, being a great admirer of Sutphen's work, has several of Sutphen's poems in mind to set eventually.<sup>99</sup>

The feeling of admiration goes both ways, as Sutphen was very pleased with the outcome of *Living in the Body*. When asked how it felt to have her words chosen to be set to music, Sutphen replied, "Wonderful, amazing – especially Lori!"<sup>100</sup> As the two artists hold each other's work in the highest regard, it will not be surprising to see them collaborate further in the future.

### **Premiere**

*The Arden Duo* first performed *Living in the Body* on March 4, 2002 at Georgia Southern University. This performance, however, is not considered to be the world premiere, as commentary was allowed and the setting was rather informal. Laitman was in attendance, as this performance was part of her first residency at a university. In addition to the faculty performing an entire concert of her works, Laitman was also able to work with both students and faculty, including Bryan and McClain.<sup>101</sup>

Open rehearsals were held for *Living in the Body*. Laitman made a few minor changes during her process of coaching Bryan and McClain for the premiere, including some shifting of the vocal lines for textual clarity. For the most part, however, the cycle was performed as Laitman had originally intended.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>100</sup> Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

<sup>101</sup> Carolyn Bryan, e-mail interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

<sup>102</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

For the most part, Lori did not alter passages. She would allow for some interpretive room but had a very definite idea of her own concept of the pieces and the way she felt they should be performed.”<sup>103</sup>

Both Bryan and McClain speak highly of their coaching experience with Laitman. The process certainly would prove interesting for all involved, as both composer and performers were experiencing how the cycle works on the stage for the first time. Bryan particularly appreciated how Laitman shared how she thought about certain passages, and how the melodies emerged from the poetry.<sup>104</sup>

The world premiere of the *Living in the Body* took place on March 7, 2002 at the North American Saxophone Alliance Biennial Conference, held at the University of North Texas. The original commission allowed Laitman to attend this performance. Bryan and McClain also traveled to the 13<sup>th</sup> World Saxophone Congress at the University of Minnesota to perform the cycle in 2003, where Joyce Sutphen was in attendance.<sup>105</sup> Other musicians that have performed *Living in the Body* include soprano Loraine Sims with saxophonist Griffin Campbell, and mezzo soprano Karyn Friedman with saxophonist Gary Louie.

## **The Cycle**

As mentioned previously, *Living in the Body* was composed to poetry from various collections of Sutphen’s works. However, reading the six poems straight through will show that Laitman put them together expertly with coherent dramatic flow. Overall, the narrator speaks in the first person about letting go of past experiences and focusing on the endless possibilities of the second half of one’s life. More specifically, the dramatic range of the cycle as a whole

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<sup>103</sup> Sandra McClain, e-mail interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

covers the narrator's childhood reminiscences, outward appearances, former trysts, imaginative daydreams, melancholy rainstorms, and finally her uncertain yet seemingly positive future.

Laitman wrote *Living in the Body* for soprano, ranging from C<sub>4</sub> to B<sub>5</sub>. The cycle's duration is approximately sixteen minutes. Laitman has added some alternate pitches in —~~Not~~ for "Burning," the third piece, to facilitate a mezzo soprano's performance. All six pieces sit mainly in the middle voice, with the exception of a few passages in the third song. Therefore, a soprano desiring to perform this set should have a strong middle and low range, while a mezzo soprano would require some facility in the medium high tessitura.

It should be noted that the score for *Living in the Body* comes in two parts: one for the singer and one for the saxophonist. Laitman transposes the saxophone score for Eb alto saxophone, writing the saxophone part a major sixth higher; therefore, from this score, the saxophone will sound a major sixth higher than the written note. In the vocal score, however, the note that sounds is written in the saxophone part. To be clear, throughout my analysis of the cycle, I will refer to the saxophone notes written in the vocal score.

### ***Living in the Body: Six Poems by Joyce Sutphen*<sup>106</sup>**

#### **1. Burning the Woods of My Childhood**

I am burning the woods of my childhood, tree by tree,  
I am warming myself by the fire of those days.  
I am remembering faces I can no longer see.

And the places I loved that are gone from me  
and the roads and the paths and the open ways,  
I am burning the woods of my childhood, tree by tree.

Where the elm trees stood, where the fox ran free,  
and we listened to the owl and the screeching jays,  
I am remembering the faces I can no longer see.

For those who walked under the pines with me,  
who cannot join me at the fire as I sit and gaze,

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<sup>106</sup> Poems reprinted with permission of Joyce Sutphen and Holy Cow! Press

I am burning the woods of my childhood, tree by tree.

Thinking old dreams that no longer can be  
Watching them fall into ashes, the reds into grays  
I am remembering the faces I no longer can see.

While the fire goes low and night is around me,  
the memory of that time rises up from the haze.  
I am burning the woods of my childhood, tree by tree,  
I am remembering the faces I no longer can see.

## **2. Living in the Body**

Body is something you need in order to stay  
on this planet and you only get one.  
And no matter which one you get, it will not  
be satisfactory. It will not be beautiful  
enough, it will not be fast enough, it will  
not keep on for days at a time, but will  
pull you down into a sleepy swamp and  
demand apples and coffee and chocolate cake.

Body is a thing you have to carry  
from one day into the next. Always the  
same eyebrows over the same eyes in the same  
skin when you look in the mirror, and the  
same creaky knee when you get up from the  
floor and the same wrist under the watchband.  
The changes you can make are small and  
costly – better to leave it as it is.

Body is a thing that you have to leave  
eventually. You know that because you have  
seen others do it, others who were once like you,  
living inside their pile of bones and  
flesh, smiling at you, loving you,  
leaning in the doorway, talking to you  
for hours and then one day they  
are gone. No forwarding address.

## **3. Not for Burning**

I come across your old letters,  
the words still clinging to the page,  
holding onto their places patiently,  
with no intention of abandoning  
the white spaces. They say  
that you will always love me,

and reading them again I almost  
believe it, but I suspect  
that they are heretics, that later,  
in the fire, they will deny it all.

Then I remember something I once  
read (my memory is filled with voices  
of the dead): that it is a heretic which  
makes the fire, and that I am more guilty  
than your words, poor pilgrims who trusted  
the road you sent them down and kept  
severely to the way. I forgive them;  
I let them live to proclaim freely what  
they thought would always be true.

#### **4. Lost at Table**

The weave in the green tablecloth  
is open. Enter it says, and I do,  
sinking down into warp and woof,  
snug in a tiny linen homestead, somewhere  
east of candlestick and west of tapestry napkin.  
And if my disappearance is noticed,  
they have ways to bring me back again:  
conversation will hover, like heat-detecting  
helicopters over endless acres of cornfields  
and find me sleeping between the rows

or walking aimlessly, singing my song,  
to turn a thousand ears from green to gold.

#### **5. Bring on the Rain**

Bring on the rain and bang the leafy  
drum with sudden sticks of water.  
Pull down the silver-chained curtain  
and fill the window with streams  
of widest water falling through  
the shoreless air.

Let the rainy sky be filled with jazz:  
drizzling saxophones, rivers of  
trumpet, xylophone pools.  
Send down some Billy Holiday  
to write sorrow on our  
dusty hearts.

And long may the rain fall, whispering



in a green tongue, just a summer's night  
slipping like a silk dress over the  
lovely bones of earth,  
misty in the fields.

## **6. Crossroads**

The second half of my life will be black  
to the white rind of the old and fading moon.  
The second half of my life will be water  
over the cracked floor of these desert years.  
I will land on my feet this time,  
knowing at least two languages and who my friends are. I will dress for the  
occasion, and my hair shall be  
whatever color I please.  
Everyone will go on celebrating the old  
birthday, counting the years as usual,  
but I will count myself new from this  
inception, this imprint of my own desire.  
The second half of my life will be swift,  
past leaning fenceposts, a gravel shoulder,  
asphalt tickets, the beckon of open road.  
The second half of my life will be wide-eyed,  
fingers sifting through fine sands,  
arms loose at my sides, wandering feet.  
There will be new dreams every night,  
and the drapes will never be closed.  
I will toss my string of keys into a deep  
well, and old letters into the grate.

(the following stanza is a part of the poem but not a part of the song)

The second half of my life will be ice  
breaking up on the river, rain  
soaking up the fields, a hand  
held out, a fire,  
and smoke going  
upward, always up.

## **Poetic Connections**

Even though the six poems used in *Living in the Body* were taken from various  
collections, their cohesiveness is certainly apparent. A reminiscent tone prevails throughout the  
first poem, as the (presumably female) narrator remembers her childhood while realizing that

those times can never return. Sutphen repeats the two phrases “I am burning the woods of my childhood, tree by tree, I am remembering the faces I can no longer see.” Almost hypnotically, as a memory comes up, the narrator reminds herself that those times are in the past.

The next piece, “Living in the Body,” moves into adulthood, using elements of humor to describe the aging body. Repetition of the word “body” and calling the body a “thing” help to clarify the body’s function: that it is only used for our time on earth. The repetition of those two words at the beginnings of stanzas serves to catch the reader’s attention. The narrator becomes nostalgic, however, remembering others who have left their earthly bodies, providing a connection between this poem to the first of the cycle.

Reminiscence is more than evident in the third poem used, “Not for Burning.” The narrator ponders the words on a page written by a past lover. She understands that the words themselves are not to blame for their falseness, and for this reason the letter should not be burned. On the contrary, the narrator herself takes the blame for believing what was not true. Sutphen personifies the words themselves as heretics, only then to discover that she herself is the heretic in this situation.

It is important to note that the poems used for the first and third song both include the word “burning” in their titles; the word holds much significance in these texts. To burn something would imply destroying it, with its only remnants its ashes. A fire burning in a fireplace or a campfire, however, hold connotations of comfort and warmth. In “Burning the Woods of My Childhood,” Sutphen implies both connotations. “I am warming myself by the first of those days” follows the title phrase. Sutphen juxtaposes the narrator’s pushing away of these haunting childhood memories with the idea that her recollections of the past are comforting to her at the same time.

In “Not for Burning,” as the narrator considers burning letters that contain falsehoods, Sutphen employs the imagery of heretics denying their beliefs as they are being burned at the stake. She then remembers reading once that it is “a heretic which makes the fire,” suggesting that if the heretic did not believe such falsehoods, the reason to have a fire would not exist. It could also mean that the heretic’s strong and passionate beliefs are fuel for the fire; their denial puts it out. The narrator decides against burning the letters, but only because she blames herself for believing falsehoods instead of their words. The image of fire and its different connotations hold significance in the passionate first and third poems of the cycle.

“Lost at Table” involves the narrator disappearing into the weave of the tablecloth, where she ends up “somewhere east of candlestick and west of tapestry napkin.” The narrator seemingly jumps back into the vivid imagination of her younger years, as suddenly the green weave of the tablecloth becomes rows of corn. As Sutphen grew up on a farm, this reference to nature could be a flashback to her childhood: the theme of reminiscence continues.

The only unpublished poem used in the cycle, “Bring on the Rain,” fits well with the themes discussed thus far. With its clever comparisons of rain to jazz music, the narrator yearns for a long rainstorm. Playing up the sensual qualities of jazz music and silk, Sutphen likens the rain to “a summer’s night slipping like a silk dress over the lovely bones of earth.” In the context of this cycle, the rainstorm washes away the narrator’s past, making way for the next poem’s positive and decided tone.

“Crossroads” celebrates new beginnings, employing further nature images. The narrator states confidently that, “The second half of my life will be water over the cracked floor of these desert years.” The reminiscent tone of the previous poems in the cycle is not present in this last song, but is only briefly mentioned towards the end of the poem: “I will toss my string of keys

into a deep well, and old letters into the grate.” The ~~“string of keys”~~ represents any attachments in the narrator’s past, while the reference to the letters corresponds with the third poem used in the cycle, ~~“Not for Burning.”~~

Interestingly enough, while setting the last poem, Laitman missed a page turn and omitted the last stanza that is present in the published version of ~~“Crossroads.”~~ She was quite embarrassed about this.<sup>107</sup> Sutphen likes the poem both with or without the last stanza; however, it is published and will continue to be published in its original form.<sup>108</sup> Laitman’s version leaves the ending open with a repetition of the phrase, ~~“The second half of my life,”~~ leaving the audience wondering about the narrator’s future.

With or without this last stanza, the cycle ends in a positive light, with hope for the narrator’s future of contentment. Throughout the set, the narrator struggles with growing up and letting go of the past. Using her own imagination and inspired by nature, the narrator then realizes that she can begin again as an adult, as long as she is open to new experiences.

### Musical Connections

Many of Laitman’s musical characteristics mentioned in Chapter 1 are present in *Living in the Body*. As previously mentioned, Laitman does not particularly appreciate theoretical and harmonic analyses of her works. Though the melodies are beautiful, the composer employs very frequent key changes, often painting the text with these key changes. No key signatures are present in this score, and meters shift every few measures as they follow the Sutphen’s prosody. The text takes precedence over musical rules, key areas, and meters in her writing. Laitman

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<sup>107</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>108</sup> Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

prides herself in customizing the melody to fit the words,<sup>109</sup> and this is evident throughout *Living in the Body*.

This being said, Laitman's harmonic language is certainly an integral part of her masterful text settings. "Not for Burning" is the only piece in this cycle that ends in the same tonal area in which it began, though it traverses many keys along the way. This is typical of Laitman's compositions: it is unusual for her songs to begin and end in the same key.<sup>110</sup> Excluding "Living in the Body's" appropriately abrupt ending, the remaining four pieces employ a similar melodic motive in their endings as their beginnings, but with slightly different pitches.

It is important to note that Laitman repeats the first lines of the poetry throughout the cycle to end each song, hence the motivic similarity. Once again, this pattern excludes "Living in the Body;" Sutphen repeats the first two lines in the published version of "Burning the Woods of My Childhood." By repeating the first lines, Laitman feels that the songs are brought to a better close dramatically.<sup>111</sup> Sutphen finds that the repetition enhances the meaning of her words:

"I think it adds to the meaning (emphasizes it, causes the hearer to linger, to stay with the thought in a more meditative way)."<sup>112</sup>

Another musical consistency throughout *Living in the Body* is the unresolved song ending. As seen in Example 3.1, the audience is left with an open fourth to end the entire cycle. While Laitman brings each song full circle with the use of line repetition and repeated motives, she leaves the listener with a sense of curiosity as the piece is left unresolved. This seems to fit

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<sup>109</sup> Lori Laitman, *Opera America Salon Series: An Evening with Lori Laitman*, September 15, 2010, <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/9596304> (accessed September 20, 2010).

<sup>110</sup> Carol Lines, "The Songs of Lori Laitman," *Journal of Singing* 64, No. 1 (September/October 2007), 45.

<sup>111</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.

<sup>112</sup> Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

with the overall dramatic sense of the cycle, as it focuses on letting go of the past and looking towards the future with a positive, if uncertain, outlook.



**Example 3.1** Open ending in “Crossroads” mm. 77-83

Word painting is frequently found throughout the cycle, both in the melody and in the saxophone accompaniment. Using repetition to illustrate word meanings is also apparent. For example, the word “same” in “Living in the Body” is repeated several times in the text: Laitman utilizes the exact motive for each repetition in both the vocal and saxophone parts, seen in Example 3.2. In addition, note duration is used to enhance the word meanings. In “Not for Burning,” Laitman allots five beats to the word “always,” where its surrounding words are set to eighth and quarter notes.



**Example 3.2** “Same” text painting mm. 17-22

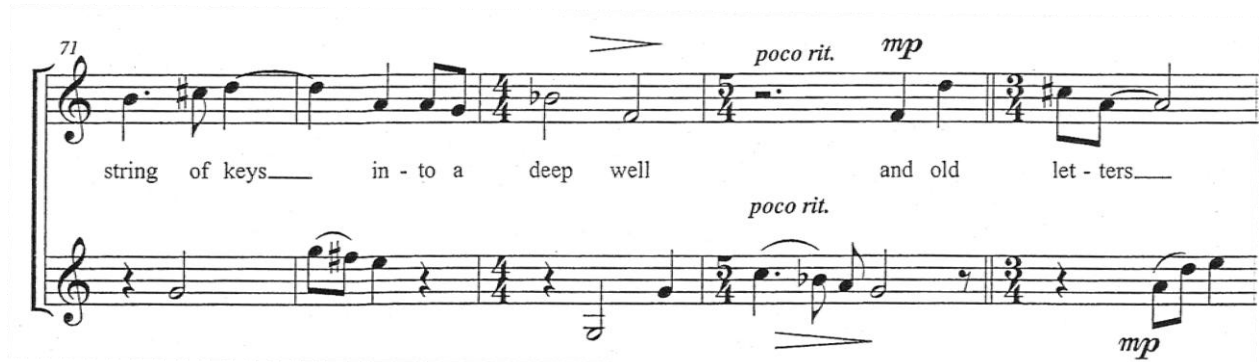
Laitman takes word painting a step further, by raising or lowering a motive in order to highlight the idea of an entire song. This is demonstrated in “Living in the Body.” While the narrator regrets the ailments of her aging body, she remembers towards the end of the piece that one day she will leave it, just as some of her loved ones already have. “Body” begins each of the three stanzas. Laitman assigns the word a motive of its own: a triplet containing an eighth note and a quarter note, with another quarter note tied to the previous one. The motive uses descending intervals first of a major fourth, then the second and third motives use a minor third. The first time the audience hears the “body” motive, it begins on a D<sub>5</sub>. The next time, Laitman begins “body” on a B<sub>4</sub>. The final “body” motive begins on an A<sub>4</sub>. From D<sub>5</sub> to B<sub>4</sub> to A<sub>4</sub>, the descending “body” motive perfectly paints the narrator’s feelings on her own faltering body, and her loved ones who have left theirs. The first use of the “body” motive is seen in Example 3.3, accentuated by the descending motive in the saxophone to demonstrate the descent of the aging body.



**Example 3.3** The “Body” Motive, “Living in the Body” m. 1

As each poem in *Living in the Body* has its own unique tone, Laitman does not use motives to unify this cycle as a whole as she does within each song. Laitman does find, however, that as she has matured as a composer she uses leitmotifs more often, not only within a

song but within a cycle or an opera.<sup>113</sup> This being said, a unifying moment can be found in measure seventy-five of “Crossroads” on the word “letters.” it is set with a descending major third on two eighth notes, the second of which ties to a half note (Example 3.4).



**Example 3.4** Motive repeat in “Crossroads” mm. 71-75

In the third song, “Not for Burning,” the composer sets the word “letters” with the same rhythmic scheme, but the interval is a descending minor third. As “Not for Burning” displays the narrator’s regret that she had once believed the letters’ falsehoods, while “Crossroads” tosses the letters into a grate as she looks forward to her future contentment, the change from minor to major further illustrates the cycle’s themes.

Adding another layer to the melodic word painting, the saxophone seemingly comments on the vocal line. Laitman composes in the same rhythmic scheme as the words she desired to highlight, and the saxophone part echoes the voice. This happens in measure thirteen of the first song (Example 3.5): while the singer holds “childhood,” the saxophone plays an almost exactly similar motive a minor sixth away, echoing the word “childhood.”

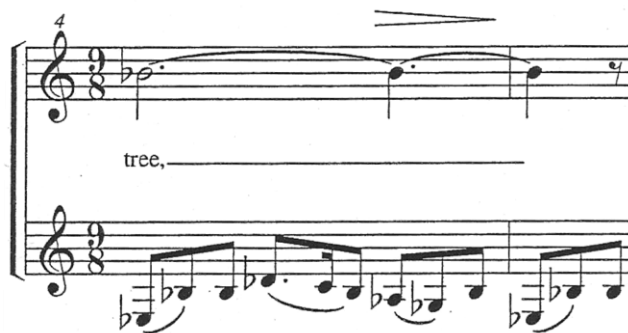
<sup>113</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 4, 2010.





**Example 3.5** Saxophone echo in “Burning the Woods of My Childhood” mm. 12-13

Not only does the saxophone enhance melodic motives, but it also aids in maintaining a rhythmic flow. Due to the sparse texture of this cycle, which involves only two non-chordal instruments, it can prove difficult for both performers and listeners to feel a sense of rhythmic continuity. The frequent shifting of meters adds to this challenge. Laitman gracefully solves this issue by using moving notes in the saxophone part to fill in where the vocal line rests. The composer also utilizes this method when the singer holds a note of longer duration. This results in smooth, flowing rhythmic patterns throughout *Living in the Body*. Example 3.6 displays one of many instances in which the saxophone’s moving notes maintain rhythmic flow while the singer is holding out a note for eleven beats.



**Example 3.6** Rhythmic flow in “Burning the Woods of My Childhood” mm. 4-5

Though the saxophone maintains the rhythmic pulse in many instances, Laitman is also not afraid to use silence throughout the cycle. The saxophone is silent in several places, often when there is an especially important phrase or pick-up to a phrase in the vocal line. Example

3.7 shows how the vocal line is left by itself throughout the majority of the last phrase in “Not for Burning;” the phrase is scored similarly when it begins the piece.



**Example 3.7** Silence in saxophone part in “Not for Burning” mm. 88-89

Sometimes the saxophone part is silent in order to establish the downbeat directly following the rest, when it enters again. While the saxophone is silent, the audience directs their attention completely to the text being expressed. Here again, Laitman achieves her goal of composing music that serves the text. This is evident not only in each song, but throughout *Living in the Body*.

General Performance Issues

While the Laitman’s writing in *Living in the Body* is distinctly lyrical with well thought-out text settings, both singer and saxophonist certainly face some challenges. Neither Bryan nor McClain have assigned the piece to any undergraduate students yet, as it requires much musical preparation and an advanced technical prowess from both singer and saxophonist.<sup>114</sup> First, singing without the chordal and rhythmic support of the piano or full orchestra makes it more difficult to establish keys. This is in part because the key changes are not as obviously prepared as when full chordal structures can be heard. This often makes finding pitches tricky. However, as is true of learning most 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century vocal music, the pitches can be perfected with

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

much repetition. The saxophone is helpful in this regard, as pitches are often found in the saxophone part before the voice enters, even if the key area changes with the vocal entrance.

Large leaps in the melody pose another challenge for the singer. Laitman rarely approaches high notes with ascending stepwise motion in this cycle. The leaps, however, serve to demonstrate a heightened emotion as they take their place in Laitman's melodic structure. Executing these leaps gracefully requires a solid technique on the singer's part.

Laitman's meters are constantly changing, which is another reason why both singer and saxophonist must have reached a certain level of musicianship before attempting *Living in the Body*. Along with the changing meters, syncopation is incorporated throughout. The syncopation adds another layer of cohesiveness, as the texture with just two instruments can seem sparse. In addition, the tempo markings vary throughout each song; Laitman even labels some passages as "freely" for the singer. The shifting meters, syncopation, and frequent tempo changes make it difficult for singer and saxophonist to stay together rhythmically; a strong sense of ensemble is required.

For the saxophonist, as with the singer, the changing meters and large intervals can prove to be challenging. The range for the Eb alto saxophone is C<sub>4</sub> to A#<sub>6</sub>, but also lies, for the most part, within instrument's middle register. Technical issues aside, simply aligning the saxophone part with the singer's melody has its difficulties:

—The piece is not as technically challenging for the sax player as much as it is putting it together with the vocalist and dealing with balance issues. I think I sweat the most over Bring on the Rain! It has a flute-like quality in the writing (and Lori is a flutist) that makes it a little difficult."<sup>115</sup>

Balance is perhaps the biggest issue that the singer and saxophonist will encounter in this work. Preparing a piece for only voice and saxophone was a first for me, and I must admit to

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<sup>115</sup> Carolyn Bryan, phone interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

being surprised by its volume and resonance when I sang with the saxophonist for the first time. Bryan continues to be astonished at how her instrument can drown out McClain's rather sizeable voice. Bryan is often tired after playing with a vocalist due to the amount of control needed to hold back dynamically.<sup>116</sup>

Singing with saxophone requires a great deal of vocal stamina as well. As much of *Living in the Body* lies in the middle to low tessitura, the singer must be able to be heard without pushing the voice past its limits. Again, this is an issue that requires a solid technique on the singer's part.

—Balance is always an issue with voice and saxophone, especially the alto sax, for which most things are written. The sax pretty much wins \_hands down.' As you can imagine, the areas where the voice is in a lower register or in the same register with the sax are most difficult. The easiest places to balance are when the soprano is in the upper range."<sup>117</sup>

As *The Arden Duo*, Bryan and McClain have dealt extensively with the issue of balance. They offer several suggestions regarding solutions to this problem. First, Bryan suggests getting a trusted ear into the hall as much as possible to listen for balance. She has also used a mute in past performances with McClain.<sup>118</sup>

Experimenting with positions can help, such as the singer placed further towards the front of the stage. The saxophonist can also turn so that the horn is not directly facing the audience. Another potential solution involves putting fabric in the bell of the horn. Hanging fabric from the saxophone player's stand can also help dampen the sound.

—Every hall is different, but there are always balance considerations. The sax player has to have excellent dynamic control in order to hold back the sound when the issues arise.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> McClain, e-mail interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

<sup>118</sup> Carolyn Bryan, phone interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

Balance in recordings is also an issue and microphones have to be very well-placed for recordings to be satisfying (and where you can hear the singer!)”<sup>119</sup>

## Analyses of Poems and Songs, with Performance Suggestions

### 1. *Burning the Woods of My Childhood*

Laitman expertly sets this poem’s longing and reminiscent tone. The narrator regrets that she cannot return to her childhood days, nor can she see loved ones that are no longer in her life. As the memories arise, the title phrase seems to cut off the narrator’s recollections as she returns to reality.

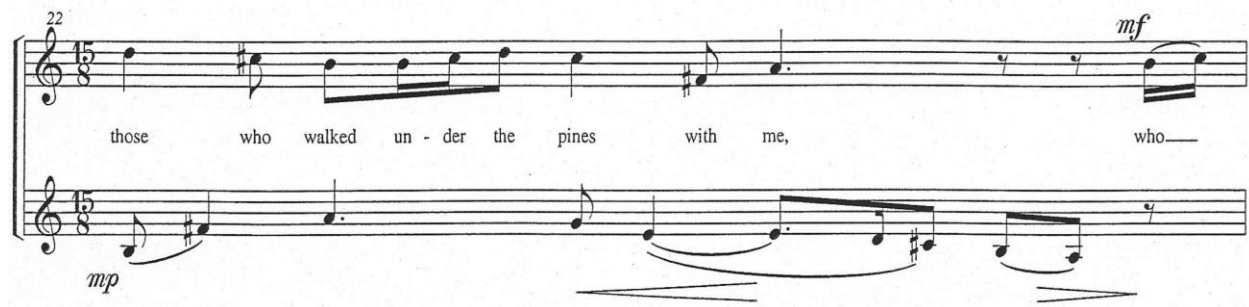
The saxophone begins the piece with a haunting motive first heard in the key of Bb minor. The motive returns throughout the piece, changing keys and duration yet serving to unify the song. The vocal line seems to cut off the motive when it enters, as if the motive represents these childhood memories from which she is trying to move on. In the first two measures, Example 3.8 shows this unifying motive. This will be referred to as the “Childhood Motive.” Its initial ascending leaps of a fifth followed by a minor third held for one and a half beats suggest to the listener a longing to overcome. It should be noted that the vocal line enters before the motive completes its repetition, both interrupting the motive’s longing repetition while allowing the singer’s first notes and words to be heard clearly.

Example 3.8 shows the musical notation for the "Childhood Motive" in measures 1-2. The score is in 9/8 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 50 (eighths remain constant). The key signature is Bb minor. The saxophone part (top staff) begins with a haunting motive: a half note Bb, a quarter note C, a quarter note D, a quarter note Eb, a quarter note F, a quarter note G, a half note Ab, and a half note Bb. The vocal part (bottom staff) enters with the lyrics "I am" and a melody that begins with a half note Bb, a quarter note C, a quarter note D, a quarter note Eb, a quarter note F, a quarter note G, a half note Ab, and a half note Bb. The tempo marking "mp" is present above the saxophone staff and below the vocal staff.

**Example 3.8** “Childhood Motive” mm. 1-2

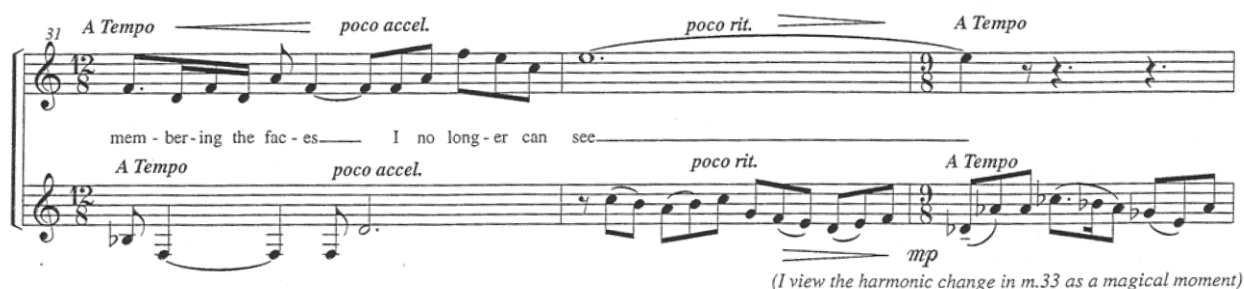
<sup>119</sup> Sandra McClain, e-mail interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

Highlighting different images from the narrator's childhood, Laitman changes the motive's keys, and plays with the duration of notes within the motive. In measures twenty-two through twenty-four, it is almost as if the "Childhood Motive" cannot fully be executed, as the narrator talks of loved ones who can no longer sit with her by the fire. The motive begins with added note value, but then dissolves at the end of the two phrases, the first of which is shown in Example 3.9.



**Example 3.9** "Childhood Motive" Variation m. 22

The "Childhood Motive" is similarly dissolved in the following section, measures twenty-seven through thirty, as the narrator watches her old dreams turn into ashes. The next time the audience hears the motive in its entirety is on the important phrase "I am remembering the faces I can no longer see," as the saxophone eventually settles into the motive on the singer's held note, this time in the key of Gb after traversing through C major for one measure. The key change is quite haunting as the vocal line lingers on an E natural above it. The narrator is still thinking about the faces she can no longer see, while the saxophone moves on with the "Childhood Motive" re-entering in measure thirty-three. Laitman also emphasizes its importance with her marking in measure thirty-three, as seen in Example 3.10.

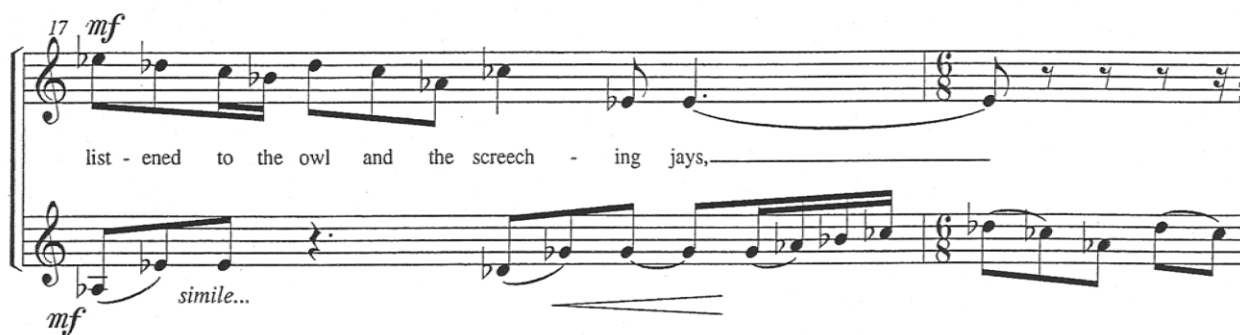


### Example 3.10 Return of “Childhood Motive” mm. 31-33

The piece ends with the phrase “I am remembering the faces I no longer can see,” as the motive returns for the last time in D minor. The motive begins and ends the piece, suggesting that the narrator will always have these childhood memories with her. The vocalist and saxophone end a minor seventh apart, leaving both narrator and listener without a true resolution.

In the vocal line, Laitman follows the rhythm of the text, often giving a longer duration to an accented syllable, such as a dotted eighth note on “burning” and “warming.” Also characteristic of her compositional style, leaps are used to emphasize certain words: in this song, the melody leaps up to the words “childhood,” “warming,” “faces,” and “gone.” This aids the singer in expressing the words that Laitman finds most important, and can be noted in the above Example 3.10 on the words “faces” and “longer.”

As discussed in the Musical Connections section of this chapter, in addition to its motivic support, the saxophone further brings out important parts of the text as it echoes the vocal line and paints the text. Throughout the piece, the saxophone echoes “my childhood” with a similar motive, as shown in Example 3.5. Though the saxophone is mainly used for motivic continuity in this song, it paints the text under “we listened to the owl and the screeching jays.” This is demonstrated in measures seventeen and eighteen in Example 3.11. The lower tones describe the owls’ sounds, while the ascending sixteenth notes into the higher register create the screeching jays’ tones.



### Example 3.11 Saxophone Text Painting mm. 17-18

This piece is perhaps the easiest one to put together with the saxophone. The saxophonist can help to maintain a steady rhythm whenever the motive enters and returns, while the singer can set the faster tempo beginning in measure fifteen. The singer can also be clear with the tempo with her eighth note pickups to most of the phrases throughout. In addition, the singer should employ a change of color in this slightly faster section to help illustrate the pleasant imagery.

It can prove difficult to maintain the pitches of the held out notes on “tree” and “see,” many of which fall into the *passaggio*. Though the [i] vowel is helpful to find the smaller space needed for traversing this area of the voice, the singer should listen carefully to the saxophone during these moments while continually supporting and reenergizing the note. This is especially important in measures thirty-two and thirty-three during which an important harmonic change occurs.

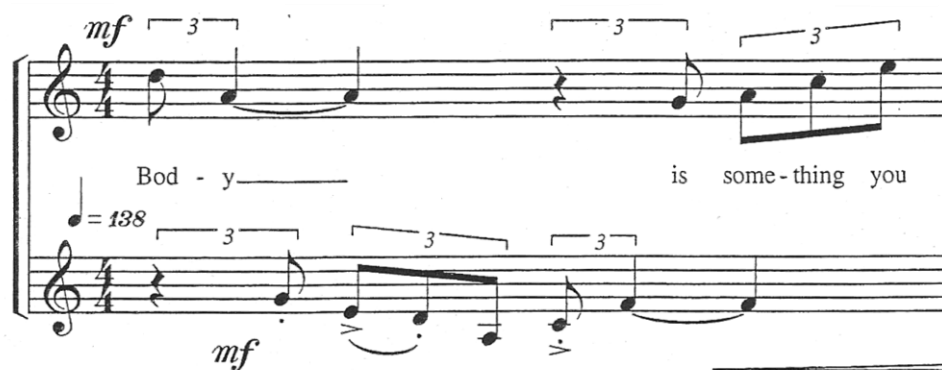
As with all Laitman songs, diction is of the utmost importance. The singer should use gentle glottal strokes when needed, and should also be careful to use maximum resonance in the lower passages in order to clarify the text throughout the range.



## 2. Living in the Body

This poem begins light heartedly, with the narrator feigning disdain over her aging body and lost youth. The third stanza then discusses how loved ones have left their bodies, and that she, the narrator, will do so one day also. The phrase “no forwarding address” ends the piece abruptly, as life can sometimes end in a similar way. “Living in the Body” speaks to all audiences, regardless of age, about appreciating the body we have while it is ours to inhabit.

Laitman’s setting of this poem is quite clever, comprising several moments of humorous text painting while still highlighting the integral moments of the text. First, the saxophone is silent at the beginning of each stanza when the vocalist sings “body.” The saxophone reenters each time with a staccato descending motive, perhaps indicating the decline of the human body as it ages, and eventually its descent into the ground. Furthermore, its delayed entrance could represent the body lagging behind the narrator as she wants to begin the piece. Laitman takes this “Body Motive” a step further as it descends with each occurrence, discussed in the Musical Connections section of this chapter. The first “body” with its respective motive is seen in Example 3.12.



**Example 3.12** First occurrence of “Body Motive” m. 1

The tempo is used to accentuate the text as well. Laitman adds an *accelerando* to the line “it will not be fast enough,” then notes a relaxation of the tempo as the phrase “but will pull you

down into a sleepy swamp” is heard. This is exemplary of Laitman’s use of time to further describe the poetry in her compositions.

More text painting ensues as the narrator sings about seeing the same eyebrows, eyes, and skin when looking in the mirror. Both the voice and accompaniment use the same notes and rhythms in this passage. This will be referred to as the “Same Motive.” In the voice part, the climax of the motive is F#<sub>5</sub> the first two times it is heard; by the third time, the singer does not make it all the way up to the F#<sub>5</sub> but instead sings an F natural.

The saxophone then assumes a more specific role. While it is silent during the phrase “when you look in the mirror,” it reenters directly after it with an echo of the same rhythmic and a similar harmonic scheme, representing the mirror. Next, the saxophone has a trill followed by a Cb<sub>6</sub> to a Gb<sub>6</sub>. In this passage, it playfully becomes the older body’s feeble shaking followed by the knee creaking. This is shown in Example 3.13, along with the “Same Motive.”

The image displays a musical score for a voice and saxophone duet. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 17-23) features a voice part with lyrics: "next. Al - ways the same — eye - brows o - ver the same — eyes in the". The saxophone part mirrors the voice's rhythm and melody, with markings for *poco rit.*, *accel.*, and a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 80$ . The second system (measures 20-23) continues the voice part with lyrics: "same — skin when you look in the mir - ror, and the same creak - y knee when you". The saxophone part continues with similar markings, including *poco rit.*, *accel.*, and a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 100$ . The score concludes with a *poco rit.* marking and the instruction "(humorously)".

**Example 3.13** The “Same Motive” followed by saxophone word painting mm. 17-23.

There are very few instances throughout the cycle in which the voice and saxophone are in rhythmic unity. Three of these moments are found in “Living in the Body,” when the narrator

considers either changing or leaving her body. The first is found with the phrase, “The changes you can make are small and costly,” as both voice and saxophone have a measure of straight eighth notes. The intervals between them vary from major fifths to major and minor sixths. This first moment of rhythmic unity is shown in Example 3.14.

26 ♩ = 100

chang - es you can make are small and cost - ly

♩ = 100

**Example 3.14** First instance of rhythmic unity mm. 26-27

The next instance is found in measures thirty-five and thirty-six, with the phrase, “You know that because you have seen others do that,” referring to loved ones leaving their bodies. The intervals here also vary, as Laitman uses both major and minor sevenths set to a pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes. Finally, the saxophone briefly joins the vocal line again in measure forty-seven, under the text “the one day.” Laitman again employs the major seventh, here with two eighth notes followed by a quarter note. The phrase continues with “they are gone.” The saxophone is silent underneath the second part of the phrase, as seen in Example 3.15.



**Example 3.15** Rhythmic unity and major sevenths m. 47

Throughout the piece, the saxophone represents the body as it demonstrates the narrator's thoughts. First, the singer begins the piece and the saxophone enters after her, representing its lagging behind her as she laments in the text. With its echoes and comments, it seems to be accentuating the body's negative aspects. In these moments of rhythmic unity, the narrator seems to be in sync with her body, appreciating it and all its imperfections as she realizes that it will not be hers forever. Laitman also employs these moments of togetherness to catch the listener's attention, as the listener has not yet heard this kind of rhythmic unity in the cycle.

This piece is both rhythmically and harmonically difficult, and requires a great deal of work from both performers. The frequently changing meters and shifting tempos are challenging for both performers; putting the piece together is more challenging yet. On the other hand, the process is both rewarding and satisfying.

As always, great diction is integral to this piece's success. Laitman sets the piece mostly in the middle tessitura for this reason. Clarity of the text can also be facilitated in measures eleven through thirteen, as Laitman suggested to saxophonist Gary Louie that he drop out under the singer's, "and demand apples and coffee and chocolate cake," reentering on the ascending line that begins on a Bb on beat five of measure thirteen. This lets the audience clearly hear these humorous words; it also allows the singer to accelerate freely.

Measures fifteen and thirty-one begin the second and third stanzas of the poem respectively, and require the singer to begin in a new key area without preparation. In measure fifteen, the pitch can be found by listening to the saxophone's Ab in measure fourteen, and going up an octave and a minor third. Similarly, the saxophone plays an F# in measure thirty. The singer may find the A by going up an octave and a minor third. The singer may also find the A by descending a whole step from the previously sung B in measure twenty-nine. These ideas aided in my efforts to find the pitches in measures fifteen and thirty. However, after much repetition and time spent with the piece, I began to hear the harmonic changes more easily.

While coaching these pieces, my wise and wonderful teacher, Professor Patricia O'Neill, suggested an interpretative idea that I have employed in my performance of the piece. In measures twenty-six through twenty-eight, Laitman leaves a quarter note rest between the phrases, —~~The~~ changes you can make are small and costly," and, ~~—better~~ to leave it as it is." Professor O'Neill proposed that during that quarter rest, the narrator could consider making changes to her body and all that it would entail, quickly deciding that it would be easier to leave it as it is.

### 3. *Not for Burning*

This poem is the most outwardly emotional and dramatic of those used in the cycle, and Laitman's setting easily fits this description. As the narrator considers burning old letters that contain falsehoods, she discovers that she is more at fault than the letters themselves, as she believed their untruths. In the second half of the poem, the narrator briefly addresses the person who wrote the letters. She states that she is —~~more~~ guilty than your words," calling his words ~~—poor~~ pilgrims who trusted the road you sent them down."

At the end of the poem, the narrator forgives the words for relaying falsehoods to her, and in turn tries to forgive herself for believing the words. Laitman ends with the same melodic motive with which she began, perhaps suggesting that the narrator does not move past her guilt. The saxophone ends a half step below the vocal line, leaving the listener without resolution.

As we have seen in the two previous pieces, the saxophone plays a large part in the drama of the song. Not only does it introduce the piece with a motive similar motive to the singer's first phrase setting, but it also introduces an important motive used by both singer and saxophone throughout the piece. I will refer to this motive as the "Struggle Motive," with its saxophone introduction following by its execution in the vocal line directly following. Please see Example 3.16.

The image shows a musical score for measures 6-9. It consists of two staves: a vocal line (treble clef) and a saxophone line (treble clef). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The vocal line has lyrics: "the words still cling - ing to the page, hold - ing on to their". The saxophone line plays a melodic motive. Dynamics include "mp" (mezzo-piano). The score is labeled "Example 3.16 'Struggle Motive' mm. 6-9".

**Example 3.16** "Struggle Motive" mm. 6-9

This motive indicates the narrator's struggle to decide what to believe. It could further highlight her journey to self discovery, as she finds herself at fault more than the words, but not without a great deal of effort. This motive is used on words central to the drama throughout, such as "abandoning" in measures thirteen and fourteen; "day" in measures thirty and thirty-one; "filled" in measure forty one; "guilty," in measures forty-nine and fifty; "freely" in measures seventy-two through seventy-four; and "always" in measures seventy-eight and eighty-two. These words also serve as climaxes of their respective phrases, highlighting the "Struggle Motive" further.

Another motive that enhances the song's dramatic continuity is found on the word "heretic," and will therefore be referred to as the "Heretic Motive." It comprises two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note, which is tied to a quarter note. The singer introduces it in measure twenty-seven, with a saxophone repetition directly following, as seen in Example 3.17.

**Example 3.17** "Heretic Motive" mm. 26-27

This motive is next seen in measure thirty-three in the saxophone part, while the singer finishes the phrase "deny it all." The saxophone, sometimes with the addition of the vocal part, continues to remind the listener of the word "heretic" with this motive in measures thirty-nine, forty-five, forty-seven, forty-nine, and fifty-two. In measure forty-nine, Laitman integrates the "Heretic Motive" with the "Struggle Motive." Appropriately, this is the point in the song during which the singer discovers that she is to blame. After the singer finishes the phrase "and that I am more guilty than your words," the saxophone enters with the "Heretic Motive" once more, as if it were reassuring the narrator that she is indeed the heretic. This is shown in Example 3.18.



**Example 3.18** –Heretic Motive” with —Struggle Motive” mm. 46-53

While Laitman’s use of text painting is not as frequent in this piece as it is in the other songs of the cycle, she accurately describes the word –freely” in her music. At this moment, the singer soars about the staff on a B natural as she forgives the words, allowing them to be free. In the descending phrase that follows, it is as if the –Struggle Motive” begins to appear, but the melisma on –freely” takes a different path.

This type of work painting can be clearly seen in Example 3.19. The appearance of the –Struggle Motive” on the word –always” in measure seventy-eight should also be noted in Example 3.19. The setting serves a dual purpose, both using in the familiar –Struggle Motive” to remind the listener of the narrator’s struggle with the past, as well as painting –always” with its longer duration.

This piece lies in the highest tessitura of all of the pieces in the cycle for both singer and saxophone. The tessitura is fitting, as the drama reaches a peak as well. Technically,



69

let them live to pro - claim free - - - - -

73

ly what they thought would al - ways be

*mf*

*melt into voice sound*

**Example 3.19** Word painting and “Struggle Motive” mm. 69-78

this is the most difficult piece for the singer. It contains many large leaps into the higher range, as well as some long phrases that require great breath control. While the tessitura is high for the saxophonist as well, he or she may not have to hold back dynamically as is required when the singer is in the middle and low ranges.

On Laitman’s website, a useful conversion page is available for mezzo-sopranos that offers alternate notes for the higher passages in this song. Laitman includes the following options:

- m. 22 instead of high Bb, sing a D flat a 6th down
- m. 23, first note - instead of a Gb, sing a Bb a 3rd down
- m. 30 and 31, option sing down an octave
- m. 32 sing a D instead of a G, leave the E in m. 33
- m. 40 instead of Gb, sing a Bb
- m. 59 instead of F# D B, sing D B B

- end of m. 66 last note - instead of Gb, sing the same Ab pitch
- m. 68, last note, sing a Bb instead of the Gb
- m. 69 instead of a half note F, sing two quarter melisma, C going down to an F
- m. 70 last note, stay on the Ab instead of singing an F
- m. 72 get rid of the high B. Instead, on beat 2, sing an E going up to an F# in eighths and then stay on the F# until the G# as written at the end of the measure.<sup>120</sup>

Like singing Puccini, it is easy to get lost in the lyricism of this song and forget about the clarity of text. However, the words in this poem are so intricately written that it is imperative that the singer be as clear as possible. Slight glottal strokes should be used when necessary, and consonants should be crisp without interrupting the legato line.

Several pitches can prove difficult for the singer to find. In measure seventeen, instead of finding the E by ascending a whole step from the saxophone's D an eighth beat before it, the singer can find it by descending a fifth from her last B sung in measure sixteen. Similarly, the singer may choose to find the Eb in measure thirty-six by descending a half step from the previously sung E natural in measure thirty-three. This Eb is also found in the saxophone (written as a D#) in measure thirty-five.

Laitman chooses to repeat the text —~~w~~at they thought would always be true” in measures eighty through eighty three, directly after the singer executes the same phrase with a similar motive. This phrase completes the climax of the piece, then is repeated at a *mp* dynamic level. The saxophone is silent under the words ~~w~~ould always be true” in both places. It seems that Laitman repeats this phrase as if the narrator begins to think again of how she felt when she believed those words. Either way, the singer should be clear in her interpretation of this repeated phrase and be sure that it differs from the first time she sings it.

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<sup>120</sup> Lori Laitman, “Conversions,” <http://www.artsongs.com> (accessed September 25, 2010).

#### 4. Lost at Table

The narrator's imagination runs free in this wonderfully creative poem. It is almost as if the narrator reverts back to childhood in this poem, relishing the innocent, carefree daydreams of her youth. In this poem, the weave in the green tablecloth cordially invites the narrator in, where she finds a comfortable home. Realizing that someone may notice her disappearance, she imagines helicopters looking for her. Then her mind strays from the helicopters, as the weavings in the cloth turn into cornfields. The narrator wanders through the fields, ripening the corn with her song. It seems that this scenario could be a likely daydream for a young girl who grew up on a farm as Sutphen did. Laitman then repeats the first line of the poem to end the song, bringing the narrator back from her daydream.

Laitman's setting of this poem fits perfectly with its playful and imaginative tone, and gives the audience a change of pace from the dramatic "Not for Burning." The saxophone introduces the light-hearted atmosphere with a descending four note major scale from the tonic pitch G. The last time the listener hears this motive in its entirety is in measure nine, as the saxophone weaves in and out of the vocal line, often using contrary motion. This playful introductory motive is shown in Example 3.20.



**Example 3.20** Saxophone introductory motive mm. 1-2

As the tablecloth encourages the narrator to enter, Laitman utilizes contrary motion between the vocal and saxophone lines to create a more unified, inviting atmosphere. The key then abruptly changes in measure eleven from G major to F major, painting the word –sinking.” Use of contrary motion and key change from G to F are evident in Example 3.21.

En - ter, it says, — and I do, sink - ing down in - to

**Example 3.21** Contrary motion and key change mm. 7-11.

Meter changes can also be noted in Example 3.21, developing a pattern between 2/4 and 3/4. This is a clear example of Laitman’s characteristic meter changes that imitate the rhythm of the text, causing the text setting to sound more like speech. In the phrase –enter it says, and I do,” the word –do” would be accented. Laitman does so musically by placing it on a downbeat, even if it requires a meter change.

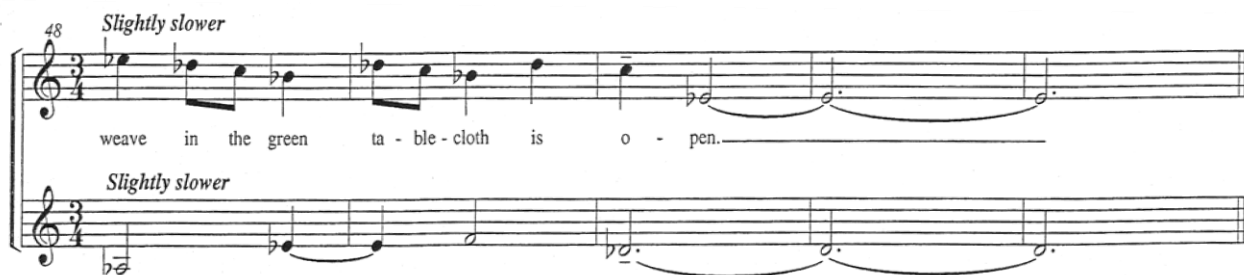
Laitman’s use of key areas adds another layer to the poetry. She begins in G major, and modulates into F major in measure eleven with the phrase –sinking down into warp and woof,” demonstrating –sinking” with key areas. She quickly moves back to G major in measure sixteen. The key change into F major can be noted in Example 3.21 above.

The key areas then begin to wander in measure twenty-nine. Laitman traverses through Db to A major as the narrator’s imagination wanders further, turning what was once the weave of the tablecloth into cornfields. She imagines napping between the rows of corn, or drifting through the fields, singing all the while. Then, as the narrator ripens the corn with her singing, Db major appears again in measure thirty-nine. As the color of the corn turns from green to

gold, Laitman's key area "opens" as well from Db to D major. Example 3.22 shows the return to Db major with the subsequent shift to D major in measure 46.

**Example 3.22** Db major "opening" to D major mm. 38-47

Laitman then repeats the first line of the poem, but this time in Ab major, a half step above its G major beginning. This leaves the listener with the sense that perhaps the narrator is not fully awake from her daydream, as she ends with the same words and motive but on higher pitches. The voice and saxophone end a whole step apart, with the saxophone on a Db and the singer on an Eb. This unresolved ending adds to the idea that the narrator is not yet ready to return to reality. Musically describing this idea even further, Laitman doubles the note values from those sung in the first phrase, with the words "tablecloth is open" set to quarter notes with the second syllable of "open" lasting an entire eight beats. This musical gesture emphasizes the narrator's wish to prolong the daydream, as she delays waking up from it by holding on to the phrase for as long as possible. The tempo slows as well. Example 3.23 illustrates the repeat of the first phrase that ends "Lost at Table."



**Example 3.23** Repeat of first phrase in Ab major mm. 48-52.

The singer should enliven her imagination when performing this song as much as did the poet and composer by taking on a child-like interpretive tone. Sutphen's choice of words is quite creative, and Laitman sets them in an easy part of the voice so that they may be heard and understood. Balance is less of an issue in this song, as the saxophone sits fairly low in its range while the singer's tessitura is middle/high.

It is especially important to bring out Laitman's use of *tenuti* over the words ~~—enter~~ in measure seven and ~~—sinking~~ in measure eleven. As discussed in the analysis section of this piece, the saxophone's contrary motion is introduced on the word ~~—enter~~,” creating an inviting atmosphere, while ~~—sinking~~” initiates a change of key area that more fully paints the word. In the following phrase, ~~—snug in a tiny linen homestead~~” in measures thirteen through fifteen, the singer should utilize a quaint tone to further demonstrate the meaning of the phrase. The same notes are heard twice within the phrase, and this should be emphasized.

Laitman employs a broad spectrum of musical colors throughout the piece and the cycle as a whole; the vocalist should take care to do the same. In the middle of measure eight, the singer must make her decision to jump into the tablecloth within two beats' time, making for a different color on ~~—and I do.~~” Another important moment is found in measures forty-six and forty-seven, as the colors literally change from green to gold; this should be demonstrated with a

vocal color change as well. Notwithstanding the light nature of this song, the singer may still use a wide palette of vocal colors.

### 5. *Bring on the Rain*

Another relatively light-hearted poem is set in the fifth song of the cycle, “Bring on the Rain.” The poem uses nature as a metaphor, likening jazz music to the pouring rain. The first metaphor used is a leaf serving as a drum while the “sticks of water” are the drumsticks. Next, the narrator imagines jazz instruments (along with a jazz singer) falling from the sky. The poem ends with the rain slipping metaphorically like a silk dress over the earth; Laitman adds a repeat of the first line, “bring on the rain,” bringing the song to a dramatic close.

Rain and jazz have much in common: both create a rhythmic pulse, and both make many different sounds. While the sounds of jazz are made with various instruments and voices, rain makes different sounds with every surface that it strikes. Furthermore, both rain and jazz can create either negative or positive feelings, depending on the circumstance. While jazz can be played in a minor key with sad lyrics, rain can ruin plans for outdoor activities. On the other hand, rain can help farmers grow their crops or create cooler weather, while jazz can be upbeat and uplifting.

“Bring on the Rain” seems to illustrate the cheerful side of both jazz and rain, seemingly washing away the narrator’s trying times in the past and clearing the way for a positive future within the context of the cycle. Sutphen offers beautifully thought-out metaphors that are brought out musically by Laitman’s ever-creative compositional style. The saxophone begins the metaphor, creating rain drops with staccato octave leaps. This reverses the metaphor from the poetry: as the text likens the rain to music, the saxophone represents the sounds of the rain.

The saxophone continues with the staccato eighth note patterns to illustrate the phrase “and bang the leafy drum with sudden sticks of water.” This is shown in Example 3.24.

Example 3.24 shows measures 1-4 of a musical score. The tempo is marked as 120. The vocal line (top staff) has lyrics: "Bring on the rain and bang the leaf - y drum with sud - den sticks of". The saxophone line (bottom staff) features staccato eighth notes. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*.

**Example 3.24** Saxophone representing rain drops mm. 1-4

Laitman musically demonstrates the next phrase, as the “streams of widest water falling” are embodied by the descending melodic line. To show the wideness of the water, Laitman doubles the duration of the previously used eighth notes in the vocal line, making them quarter notes on the words “widest water.” Adding to this musical imagery, Laitman uses *tenuti* to lengthen the descending eighth note pattern. This can be seen in Example 3.25.

Example 3.25 shows measures 9-11 of a musical score. The tempo is marked as 120. The vocal line (top staff) has lyrics: "fill the win - dow with streams of wid - est wa - ter fal - ling". The saxophone line (bottom staff) features a descending melodic line with tenuto marks. Dynamics include *mf*.

**Example 3.25** Musical imagery mm.9-11

Elements of jazz are found in the music as jazz instruments are incorporated into the poetry. The saxophone plays *glissandi* in measures twenty-two and twenty-three. It should be noted that these *glissandi* serve as a clear transition into the jazz section of the song, as this is the only instance of *glissando* for both singer and saxophone in the entire cycle. Example 3.26 displays these *glissandi*.





**Example 3.26** *Glissandi* in saxophone part mm. 18-23

Next, under the words “drizzling saxophones,” descending short motives serve to paint the text. These motives are formed with three half steps set to two sixteenth notes followed by a staccato eighth note; the three notes are slurred together, creating a “drizzling” effect. The saxophone continues with these motives until the singer describes “rivers of trumpet,” when it imitates a trumpet in a clear, declamatory motive made up of eighth and sixteenth notes. The vocal part imitates the trumpet as well, as it jumps to held F# and moves down a fourth, also declamatory in style. These two instances of text painting are shown in Example 3.27.

**Example 3.27** Musical illustration of saxophones and trumpet mm. 24-28

“Xylophone pools” come next: for this phrase, the saxophone illustrates leaps of a descending fifth and a minor sixth. No slur is included in this motive, making it almost percussive sounding, leading the listener to imagine a xylophone being played. Following the pools of xylophones, the narrator requests that the sky should “bring down some Billie Holliday to write sorry on our dusty hearts.” The beloved jazz vocalist, known for singing with much

emotion and pizzazz, brought feeling to many an unfeeling heart in her day, and continues to do so thanks to the recording industry. Both the vocal and saxophone parts emphasize this with syncopation and chromatics, creating the atmosphere of easy jazz. The musical illustrations of xylophones and Billie Holiday are seen in Example 3.28.

The musical score for Example 3.28 consists of two systems. The first system (measures 29-34) features a xylophone part and a vocal line. The xylophone part is marked *mp* and the vocal line is also marked *mp*. The lyrics for the vocal line are: "xy - lo - phone pools. — Send down some — Bil - lie". The second system (measures 35-39) continues the xylophone and vocal parts. The lyrics for the vocal line are: "Hol - i - day to write sor - row on our dus - ty hearts." The score includes various meter changes, indicated by the time signatures at the beginning of each system.

**Example 3.28** Musical illustrations of xylophone and Billie Holiday mm. 29-39

Laitman continues to use syncopation throughout the rest of the song, as the rain slips over the earth like a silk dress. This syncopation adds to the smooth texture of the music, connecting over the bar lines and creating a seamless feel, much like silk itself. The piece then ends with a repeat of the first phrase, bringing it full circle, as is characteristic of Laitman in this cycle. The last line uses different intervals than the first, but the last three pitches are only a half step away from the first execution of the line. Ultimately, the saxophone and voice leave the listener with the interval of a minor third. Going into the last song, this lack of resolution leaves the listener wanting more.

Like “Living in the Body,” this piece poses many challenges for both singer and saxophonist. Rhythmically, the piece changes meters nearly every measure until measure thirty-nine, where 3/4 takes the performers to the end of the piece. The meters not only change in beats

per measure, but also the note which receives the beat shifts. In the first system of “Bring on the Rain,” four different meters are used in four measures, as Laitman moves from 4/8 to 7/8 to 3/4 to 5/8. This is seen earlier in example 3.24. Though feeling these frequent meter changes will take much practice on the part of the performers, these changes allow Laitman to highlight important words of each phrase. She often places such words on downbeats, illustrated in Example 3.29. The singer should pay close attention to these words placed on strong beats in order to more fully understand what the composer thinks is central to the piece with regards to text.



**Example 3.29** Important text on strong beats mm. 18-21

The saxophonist is especially challenged in this song, as the range sits higher than in the other five songs. The staccato eighth and sixteenth notes can also prove difficult. Several of the highest passages for the saxophone are written while the vocal line is resting, showing Laitman’s concern for balance. This happens in measures six, fifteen, twenty-two, and thirty-eight. The saxophonist does have to hold back dynamically in this piece, however, as the singer remains for the most part in her middle range.

Though the saxophone takes care of much of the musical imagery in this song, there are several moments the singer can add to the picture. In the first phrase, the word “bang” should be sung in an onomatopoetic manner, with much emphasis on the [b]. A similar instance of

onomatopoeia occurs in measure forty-three with the word ~~whispering~~.” the singer should emphasize the rush of air while forming its beginning consonants.

When mezzo soprano Karyn Friedman performed *Living in the Body* with saxophonist Gary Louie, she added elements of jazz style to the vocal line throughout. Laitman loved this interpretation.<sup>121</sup> Depending on how comfortable the singer is with a jazz style, some tasteful slides may be included on notes such as ~~—jazz~~” in measure twenty-one, ~~drizzling~~” in measure twenty-four, and ~~—pools~~” in measure thirty-one. The phrase ~~—rivers of trumpet~~” should interrupt the elements of jazz style on the singer’s part, and should instead be sung in a declamatory manner so that both singer and saxophone are clearly painting a musical picture of the trumpet. The singer should of course make an attempt to sound like Billie Holiday while singing about her, perhaps thinning the voice slightly and using less vibrato until the end of the phrase. Laitman makes this easier, as her vocal line imitates Billie Holiday’s style.

Finally, the singer should emphasize the [s] sounds in the phrase ~~—just~~ a summer’s night slipping like a silk dress over the lovely bones of earth.” It adds to the smooth musical texture, helping to musically illustrate the word ~~—silk~~.” The singer should be sure that the listener understands this sensual imagery.

## 6. Crossroads

The narrator is at a turning point in this poem, as the title suggests. Though the word ~~—crossroads~~” is never used in the poem, the text focuses on the second half of the narrator’s life. She describes her dreams and goals, and is determined this second part of her life will be much better than the first. Her eyes and mind will be open to whatever new adventures come her way, following the open road with reckless abandon. In the last stanzas that Laitman sets, the narrator

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<sup>121</sup> Lori Laitman, e-mail interview with the author, September 9, 2010.

throws both her keys into a deep well and her old letters into a grate, signifying that she has moved on from her past and looking to the future with a positive and open mind.

After studying the poem, I wondered if perhaps Sutphen was suggesting that the “second half” of life referred to life once we’ve left our earthly bodies. While she very much liked that interpretation, Sutphen wrote with the second half of life on earth in mind.<sup>122</sup> Within the context of the cycle, the second half of earthly life makes more sense as well: we see reminiscence, guilt, and regret in the first three songs, “Burning the Woods of My Childhood,” “Living in the Body,” and “Not for Burning.” The fourth song, “Lost at Table,” brings the narrator back to her childhood days of letting her mind wander freely. Next, the rain brings images of comforting jazz music and silk dresses, highlighting the simple pleasures in life and washing away what is past in “Bring on the Rain.” Finally, Sutphen and Laitman bring the narrator to a positive place in this last song, letting go of past struggles and enjoying venturing into the unknown.

Laitman integrates unique musical ideas into this piece that serve to illustrate the text, as she has done throughout the cycle. As the narrator decides that the second half of her life will be fresh and new, she begins the song instead of the saxophone beginning it, as it has with most of the other songs in the cycle. It is as if she has finally taken the reins of her life, and the

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 150. It begins with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The melody starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, then a quarter note B4. The lyrics "The se - cond half of my life will be" are written below the first three notes. The tempo then changes to "poco accel." (indicated by a line with a wedge) and the melody continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a quarter note E5. The lyrics "black to the white rind of the" are written below these notes. The tempo then changes to "relax tempo" (indicated by a line with a wedge) and the melody continues with a quarter note F5, a quarter note G5, and a quarter note A5. The bottom staff is in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 150. It begins with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The melody starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, then a quarter note B4. The lyrics "The se - cond half of my life will be" are written below the first three notes. The tempo then changes to "poco accel." (indicated by a line with a wedge) and the melody continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a quarter note E5. The lyrics "black to the white rind of the" are written below these notes. The tempo then changes to "relax tempo" (indicated by a line with a wedge) and the melody continues with a quarter note F5, a quarter note G5, and a quarter note A5.

**Example 3.30** Vocalist takes the reins mm. 1-5

<sup>122</sup> Joyce Sutphen, e-mail interview with the author, August 28, 2010.

saxophone repeats her motive a beat behind her, instead following the narrator this time. This is illustrated in Example 3.30.

In this first phrase, Laitman also introduces large leaps in the vocal line, which will be heard throughout. Not only do these leaps emphasize the most important words of the phrase, but in this song, they serve another purpose as well: they musically describe the narrator's sense of adventure, as she is willing to leap into the unknown. Laitman uses these octave or major seventh leaps consistently throughout the piece to separate and emphasize each different idea the narrator forms about what the second half of her life will be. A later use of the octave leap is found in measures forty-two and forty-three. Here, Laitman changes the note value of the idea to further paint the word "swift," as seen in Example 3.31.

**Example 3.31** Octave Leap with text painting mm. 41-44

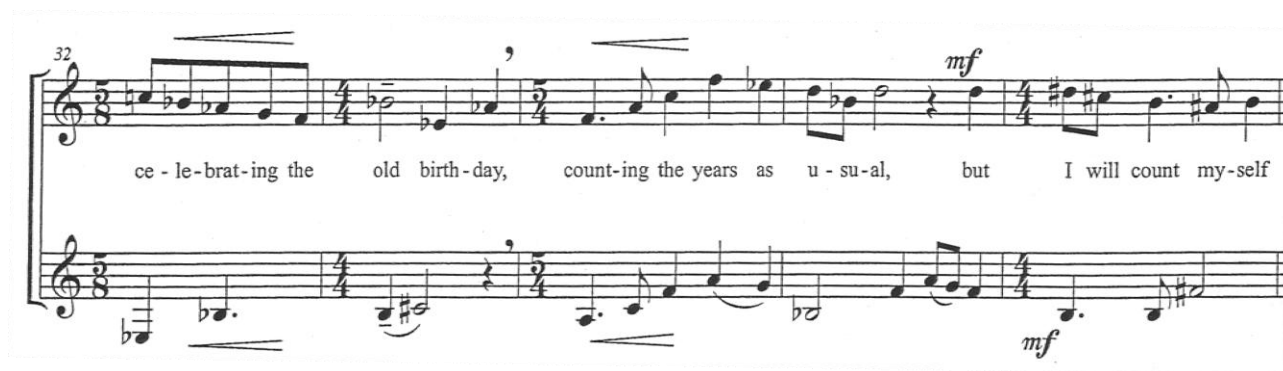
The tempo increases as the narrator takes a more decided tone beginning in measure sixteen. In addition, Laitman keeps a more consistent meter of 3/4 with a just two 4/4 measures mixed in until measure thirty, musically highlighting the narrator's sureness. Also in this section, we see some of the childlike stubbornness that we also saw in the fourth song. In "Lost at Table," the narrator wants to be free to wander around the cornfields of her imagination. The narrator desires the same freedom in "Crossroads," and takes a feisty tone both poetically and musically, determined to do things her own way this time. Laitman utilizes the unexpected

octave leap in measure twenty-six to musically demonstrate the narrator's determination.

Example 3.32 shows how Laitman set the narrator's decided tone.

**Example 3.32** Determination in the text and music mm. 23-31

The next section begins with the narrator lamenting the mundane birthday celebration defined by the number of years that one has lived. Laitman illustrates her attitude with two measures of straight eighth notes in a fast tempo, only to land on “old” set as a half note with a *tenuto*. The phrase “counting the years as usual” is set in Bb major, and Laitman ends it in the tonic. We don’t see or hear many simple V-I cadences in this cycle, unless of course they illustrate the text. Such is the case here, as Laitman employs the mundane V-I cadence as text painting for the word “usual.” The next phrase jumps to E major in measure thirty-eight, as the narrator begins a new part of her life. This is shown in Example 3.33.



**Example 3.33** Mundane Bb cadence into E major mm. 32-36

The E major continues through the rest of the phrase, through measure forty. Instead of a mundane V-I cadence here, Laitman almost ends on the tonic E on the word “desire;” she even marks a *tenuto* on the E. Instead, the singer ends a fifth above on the B, further illustrating this positive feeling about her future. This can be seen in Example 3.34.



**Example 3.34** Hopeful cadence mm.37-40

Beginning in measure forty-nine, the narrator takes on a more serene tone, focusing on being open to whatever path lies ahead. Laitman requests a *mp* from the performers, and the tempo is *slightly slower*. It seems that here, the narrator becomes reflective as she thinks of the endless possibilities that the future holds for her. Laitman further describes these reflections with key changes: in measure fifty-three and fifty-four, she uses D major, then shifts to E major in measure fifty-five. Then suddenly, the next reflection is in Ab major, as the key signature wanders along with the narrator’s feet. This is displayed in Example 3.35.



50 *slightly slower, calmer* *more in tempo*

se-cond half of my life will be wide-eyed, fing-ers sift-ing through fine sands,

*slightly slower, calmer* *more in tempo*

*mp*

55

arms loose at my sides, wand-er-ing feet.

**Example 3.35** Wandering key signatures mm. 50-59

The final section of the song is lyrically set; the large intervals to represent leaping into the unknown are still present, but they don't always land on the strong beat as the narrator has

60 *slower* *mp*  $\text{♩} = 132$

There will be new dreams ev'-ry night,

*slower*  $\text{♩} = 132$  *p*

65 *poco accel.* *mf*

and the drapes will nev-er be closed. I will toss my

*poco accel.* *mf*

**Example 3.36** Lyric leaps and saxophone echo mm. 60-70

become calmer and more reflective. Laitman emphasizes ~~—w~~” with three beats, placing it on the strong beat in a measure of 7/4. The saxophone echoes of the text that were heard earlier in the cycle return in measures sixty-eight and again in measure seventy-eight, helping the listener to remember the importance of the singer’s words being repeated. These musical illustrations are shown in Example 3.36.

Also on display in Example 3.36 is the text painting on the word ~~—toss~~.” The *poco accelerando* acts as the wind-up for the rest of the phrase, and ~~—toss~~” is approached through the representative leap into the unknown. The phrase also begins a new key, shifting from Eb major to D major as the narrator feels a sense of resolution in sight.

Continuing through the phrase ~~—I~~will toss my keys into a deep well,” the key changes again as Laitman musically paints the words ~~—deep well~~,” shifting keys briefly into F major. The unexpected Bb is lower than the listener would anticipate. Shifting back to D major, Laitman then interpolates a motive from ~~—Not for Burning~~” in measure seventy-five, as the narrator throws her old letters into the grate. In ~~—Not for Burning~~,” the motive on ~~—letters~~” consists of two eighth notes with a quarter note tied to the second eighth note; a minor third separates the two eighth notes. As the narrator truly disposes of these letters, we see the motive change to a major third separating the two eighth notes, and the pitches above the earlier motive by a whole step. Laitman ties a half note to the second eighth note this time, as if the narrator lingers for a moment, then decidedly tosses her past, in the form of letters, into the grate. The saxophone echoes the words ~~—into the grate~~,” serving to finalize the narrator’s actions. Example 3.37 shows these musical ideas.

71 *poco rit.* *mp*  
 string of keys in - to a deep well and old let - ters in - to the

*poco rit.*  
*mp*

77 *mp* *relax tempo*  
 grate. The se - cond half of my life

*relax tempo*  
*p*

**Example 3.37** Motive repeated from “Not for Burning” and saxophone echo mm. 71-83

Characteristic of her song endings in this cycle, Laitman repeats the first line of poetry, bringing the piece to a dramatic close with the motive a minor third above where it began, bringing the song to a close in D major. While the vocal line ends on the decidedly on the tonic, the saxophone begins on the tonic, then ventures upwards to a high G. The voice and saxophone end a fourth apart, leaving the listener with a sense of hope but without a feeling of complete resolution, as the narrator’s future is unknown to all.

The first challenge for the vocalist in this song is finding the initial pitch without any help. The fifth song ends on a D<sub>5</sub>, and the singer needs to find an F<sub>4</sub> to begin “Crossroads.” While a minor sixth isn’t exactly easy for the singer to find out of context, my saxophonist and I discovered that if the singer can listen to the saxophone’s last pitch in “Bring on the Rain,” the singer can think one half step above it to find the F<sub>4</sub>. This is much easier than traversing down a minor sixth from the singer’s last pitch in song five. This way is also helpful in the sense that

the singer is already tuned with the saxophone for the beginning of “Crossroads,” as the first pitch was taken from the saxophone’s last pitch.

As the text suggests, the singer must take the lead in this piece, setting and keeping the rather fast pace. The vocal line contains more moving notes than the saxophone part. The frequently changing meters and tempo changes can make this song difficult to put together, but as long as both performers stick to the plan in the score, the two parts will gel beautifully into a whole.

The part of the phrase following “the second half of my life” should be a legato contrast to the very decided and somewhat disjunct motion of the setting of the first part of the phrase. Laitman asks for a relaxation of tempo on the second part of the phrase, and it often descends to help paint the meaning of the phrase. The singer may imagine running to a ledge in the first part of the phrase, and then in the second part jumping off into the unknown and slowly descending

The image displays a musical score for a song, likely 'Crossroads'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The first system starts at measure 6. The vocal line has lyrics: 'old and fad-ing moon. The se-cond half of my life will be wa - ter'. The piano part has lyrics: 'o - ver the cracked floor of these de - sert years. I will land on my'. Both parts feature tempo changes: 'poco accel.' and 'relax tempo'. The second system starts at measure 12. The vocal line has lyrics: 'o - ver the cracked floor of these de - sert years. I will land on my'. The piano part has lyrics: 'o - ver the cracked floor of these de - sert years. I will land on my'. Both parts feature tempo changes: 'a tempo', 'poco rit.', and 'Slightly Faster' (marked with a quarter note = 200). The score is written in 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 time signatures.

**Example 3.38** Jumping into the unknown mm. 6-16

to her landing. A clear illustration of this setting is found in measures eight through fifteen of Example 3.38. In this case, the singer may think of the descent as the water seeping into the cracks of the narrator's dry year, making the soil fertile once again

. Beginning with the pick-up to measure sixteen, the audience should see the singer taking on the almost child-like, insistent nature of the character in ~~“Lost at Table.”~~ Now the narrator doesn't care what other people think, much like she wanted to be left alone in the corn fields of her imagination in the fourth song. Then in measure thirty-one, the singer should take on an uninterested tone as she laments mundane birthday celebrations. A new, exciting color should be brought into the singer's tone in measure thirty-six, as the narrator describes her new start with ~~“but I will count myself new from this inception.”~~

In the last section beginning in measure sixty-two, the singer should not allow the tempo to slow down too much. The beautiful lyricism makes it tempting, but the piece should not lose its momentum and sense of venturing into the unknown. The word painting in measures seventy and seventy three should be emphasized by the singer on the words ~~“toss”~~ and ~~“deep.”~~

As the phrase ~~“old letters”~~ in measures seventy-four and seventy-five should remind the listener of its occurrence in ~~“Not for Burning,”~~ the singer should linger on it slightly, remembering what was written in these old letters, before continuing to throw them into the grate. On the final phrase, repeating ~~“the second half of my life,”~~ the singer should imagine what is to come while holding the last note, perhaps allowing the saxophone's ascent to have an effect on these thoughts. It is almost as if Laitman was setting the omitted stanza in the saxophone part without even knowing it, demonstrating the ~~“smoke going upward, always up.”~~

## CONCLUSION

After intimately studying this cycle, it is clear to me why Lori Laitman is one of America's most sought-after art song composers. Her lyrical, well thought-out melodies are shaped perfectly to fit the natural rhythmic flow of the text while highlighting the most important words of the phrase. Always considerate of the singer and focused on relaying the meaning of the words, she writes in a tessitura that allows the singer to communicate with their listeners. Laitman's accompaniments add another interpretational layer, often commenting or creating musical imagery to enhance the meaning of the text.

Laitman's settings of Sutphen's beautiful texts in *Living in the Body* are so rich in detail and full of musical metaphor that it was difficult to choose the most important points to include in this document and its coinciding lecture. Each time I sing or study this cycle, I find something new, which is a tribute to both poet and composer. I would encourage any singer and saxophonist with the required technical prowess to perform this wonderful cycle; it will surely be a challenge for both musicians, but the process is a satisfying and rewarding one.

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## APPENDIX A

### FULL WORKS LIST FOR LORI LAITMAN

\*All songs published under Laitman's label, Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI, with the exception of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, published by the Arsis Press.

***The Metropolitan Tower and Other Songs (1991-1992)*** (soprano/piano)

6 settings of Sara Teasdale. 12 minutes.

The Metropolitan Tower; A Winter Night; Old Tunes: The Strong House; The Hour; To A Loose Woman

**Dreaming (1991)**

(soprano; soprano and baritone; soprano and mezzo; SATB) (Humorous encore song). 2 minutes. Words and music by Lori Laitman.

***The Love Poems of Marichiko (1993, rev. 1994)***

(soprano/cello) Poems by Kenneth Rexroth. 12 minutes.

I Sit at my desk; If I Thought; Oh the Anguish; You Ask Me; Autumn; Just Us

***Days and Nights (1995)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Browning, Dickinson, Rossetti, Bourdillon. 12 1/2 minutes.

Along with Me; They Might Not Need Me; The Night Has A Thousand Eyes; Over the Fence; Song; Wild Nights

**Echo (1995)**

(available for baritone, soprano, mezzo) Setting of Christina Rossetti. 3 1/2 minutes.

**The Ballad Singer (1995)**

(baritone/piano) Setting of Thomas Hardy. 2 minutes.

***Thumbelina Songs (1989, rev. 1995)***

lyrics by Lori Laitman and Wendy-Marie Goodman.

A Tale to Tell, Alone, Fine Family, I'm Falling in Love, King Song, I am the Mole, Wish Song, My Son, Thumbelina, Wedding Day. (not yet published)

***I Never Saw Another Butterfly (1996)*** -- 6 settings of poems by children who were killed in the Holocaust. Available in the original soprano/saxophone version; and also a soprano/clarinet version and a soprano/bassoon version. Published by Arsis Press. 15 minutes.

The Butterfly; Yes, That's The Way Things Are; Birdsong; The Garden; Man Proposes, God Disposes; The Old House

***Plums (1996)***

(soprano/piano) Two settings of William Carlos Williams. About 2 minutes total.

To a Poor Old Woman, I Just Wanted to Say.

***Four Dickinson Songs (1996)***

(soprano/piano; also mezzo/piano version) poems by Emily Dickinson. 9 minutes.

Will There Really Be A Morning?, I'm Nobody, She Died, If I...

***Between the Bliss and Me (1997)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Emily Dickinson. almost 5 minutes.

I gained it so, The Book, I could not prove.

***Mystery (1998)***

(baritone/piano or mezzo-soprano/piano). Poems by Sara Teasdale. 10 minutes.

Nightfall, Spray, The Kiss, The Mystery, The Rose

***Daughters (1998)***

(mezzo-soprano and piano trio) Poems by Anne Ranasinghe and Karen Gershon. 18 minutes.

Mascot and Symbol; Stella Remembered; A Letter to My Daughter

***Holocaust 1944 (1996, rev. 1998)***

(baritone and doublebass) Poems by Ficowski, Vogel, Rosewicz, Gershon, Ranasinghe. 28 minutes.

I did not manage to save; How can I see you, love; Both your Mothers; What Luck; Massacre of the Boys; Race; Holocaust 1944

***Homeless (1998)***

(mezzo-soprano/piano) Poem by Michael Flack. 3 1/2 minutes.

***Sunflowers (1999)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Mary Oliver. 14 minutes.

*The Sunflowers, Dreams, Sunrise*

***I am in Need of Music (1999)***

(duet for soprano/baritone with piano or soprano/mezzo with piano) Poem by Elizabeth Bishop. 4 minutes.

***Men with Small Heads (2000)***

(available for countertenor, mezzo-soprano or baritone/piano) Poems by Thomas Lux. 11 minutes.

Men with Small Heads; Refrigerator, 1957; A Small Tin Parrot Pin; Snake Lake

***This Space (2000, rev. 2005)***

(bass/piano, also mezzo/piano version). Poem by Thomas Lux. 2 minutes.

***Armgart (2000)***

(soprano/piano) Poem by George Eliot. 3 minutes.

***One or Two Things (2001)***

(mezzo- soprano/piano) Poems by Mary Oliver. 5 minutes.

Don't Bother Me; The God of Dirt; One or Two Things

***Round and Round (2001)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Anne Spencer Lindbergh. 9 minutes.

Earlier this Afternoon; Little Plump Person; I Contrived A Poem; Bar the Door; Little Anne; Round and Round

***The Years (2001)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Sara Teasdale. 9 minutes.

Jewels; To-Night; Barter; Faults; The Years

***Living in the Body (2001)***

(soprano/saxophone) Poems by Joyce Sutphen. 15 minutes.

Burning the Woods of my Childhood; Living in the Body; Not for Burning; Lost at Table; Bring on the Rain; Crossroads

***And I Will Bring Them (2001, rev. 2003, 2009)***

(soprano/piano) Text from the Bible, Isaiah 56:7

***Within These Spaces (2002)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Marjorie Saiser, Janet Coleman and Judith Sornberger. 16 minutes

I Grow to be My Grandmother; My Mother Has Recovered; Letter to my Daughter; The China Cup; Pioneer Child's Doll

***Little Elegy (2002)***

(soprano/piano) Poem by Elinor Wylie. 1 minute.

***Long Pond Revisited (2002)***

(baritone/cello). Poems by C.G.R. Shepard. 15 1/2 minutes.

I Looked for Reasons; The Pond Seems Smaller; Late in the Day; Days Turn; Long Pond Revisited.

***Two Dickinson Songs (2002)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Emily Dickinson. 4 minutes.

Good Morning Midnight; Wider than the *Sky*

***Lines Written at the Falls (2002)***

(soprano/piano) Poem by Thomas Moore. 3 1/2 minutes

***Captivity (2002, revised in 2004, 2007 and 2008)***

(soprano/trumpet) Originally 5 settings:

The Minks; The Struggle; Books; The Polishers of Brass; The Weakness

Revised again in 2007 into 2 separate cycles. Published in June 2008, as ***Captivity***, with 3 songs: The Polishers of Brass, Books and The Weakness. The other 2 songs will be reworked with piano and published at a later date.

***Fathers (2002, rev.2003, rev. 2010)***

(baritone/piano trio or mezzo-soprano/piano trio. There are also baritone and mezzo versions with flute instead of violin.) Baritone version premiered by Music of Remembrance, Benaroya Hall, April 2003 and mezzo version premiered at Music of Remembrance in March 2010. Poems by Ranasinghe and Vogel.

Fragment 1; You, Father; Fragment 2; Last Night I Dreamt; fragment 3; I Saw My Father Drowning; Don't Cry.

***Early Snow (2003)***

(soprano/piano) Poems by Mary Oliver. 9 minutes.

Last Night the Rain Spoke to me, Blue Iris, Early Snow

***The Throwback (2003)***

(baritone/piano). 5 settings of Paul Muldoon. 8 1/2 minutes.

Cradle Song for Asher; The Ancestor; Redknots; The Breather; The Throwback

***One Bee And Revery (2003)***

(soprano/piano) Three Dickinson settings. 4 minutes.

The Butterfly upon; Hope is a Strange Invention; To Make A Prairie

***Sleep, Little Child (2003)***

Any voice type and piano. Short lullaby, words by Lori Laitman. 1:40 minutes.

***Fresh Patterns (2003)***

(soprano, soprano and piano). Texts from Emily Dickinson and Annie Finch. 10 minutes.

It's All I Have to Bring Today (Dickinson, soprano and piano); A Letter for Emily Dickinson (Finch, soprano and piano); Fresh Patterns (soprano, soprano and piano/Dickinson and Finch)

***Becoming A Redwood (2003)***

(high voice and piano/high voice and orchestra). Poems by Dana Gioia. 14 minutes.

The Song (after Rilke); Pentecost; Curriculum Vitae; Becoming A Redwood

***Money (2003)***

(for voice and piano/also duet setting soprano/baritone/piano). Poem by Dana Gioia. 2 minutes.

***The Apple Orchard (2004)*** composed Dec. 200- Jan 1, 2004 (about 2.5 minutes)

(Versions for tenor, baritone or soprano with piano). Poem by Dana Gioia. 2 1/2 minutes.

***Being Happy (2004)***

(baritone/piano). Poem by Dana Gioia. 2 minutes.

***Swimmers on the Shore (2004)***

(baritone/piano). Poem by David Mason. 5 minutes.

***If I... choral version.*** Arrangement by Bruce Rosenblum.

***Come to Me in Dreams (2004)***

One-Act Chamber Opera

50 minute opera created from Laitman's songs by Cleveland Opera's David Bamberger.

I Did Not Manage to Save; Faults; Yes, That's the Way Things Are; To-Night; Birdsong; Massacre of the Boys; Wild Nights; The Butterfly; The Years; Holocaust, 1944; Man Proposes, God Disposes; Jewels; The Garden; Both Your Mothers; Echo.

**My Garden (2004)**

soprano/piano. Poem by Adelaide Ayer Kelley. (not yet published)

**On A Photograph (2004)**

(Solo version for all voice types; duet versions for mezzo/baritone and mezzo/bass) Poem by John Wood. 5 minutes.

***The Seed of Dream (2004)***

(baritone or mezzo-soprano with cello and piano accompaniment).

Poems by Vilna Ghetto survivor Abraham Sutzkever, with translations by C.K. Williams and Leonard Wolf.

I Lie in This Coffin; A Load of Shoes; To My Child; Beneath the Whiteness of Your Stars; No Sad Songs, Please.

***Five Lovers (2004)***

(soprano/piano). Poems by Jama Jandrokovic. 8 minutes.

On Meeting Again; Lovely in His Bones; This Morning; Second Date; July, 95 degrees.

**Equations of the Light (2005)**

high voice and piano/also duets for soprano and baritone or soprano and tenor with piano).

Poem by Dana Gioia. 4 1/2 minutes.

***The Perfected Life (2006)***

soprano and tenor/mezzo and baritone versions. Poems by Emily Dickinson.

An Amethyst Remembrance (2005); Dear March; The Perfected Life (2006).



***River of Horses (2006)***

(soprano/piano). Poems by Baudelaire, James Wright, James Dickey, Traditional Navajo poem.  
10 minutes.

My Hand Forever, A Blessing, A Birth, Sioux Warrior Song, Two Horses

(not yet published or premiered)

***Orange Afternoon Lover (2006)***

(soprano/piano.; and mezzo-soprano/piano version) Poems by Margaret Atwood.

Against Still Life, I Was Reading A Scientific Article, I Am Sitting on the Edge

***Eloise at Yaddo (2006)***

(soprano/piano). Poem by David Yezzi.

***Full Moon and Light Hearted William: Two William Carlos Williams Songs (1997, rev.2007)***

(tenor/piano). Poems by William Carlos Williams.

***The Blood Jet (2006)***

(soprano/piano). Poems by Sylvia Plath. 2008.

Morning Song; The Rival; Kindness; Balloons

***The Silver Swan (2007)***

Two versions; one for mezzo-soprano and piano; one for mezzo-soprano, piano and flute.  
(Although this can also work for soprano (or tenor, or baritone.)

Poem by Orlando Gibbons. June 2008.

***On The Green Trail (2007)***

Two versions: one for soprano and piano; one for tenor and piano. Poems by Jeff Gundy.  
Published in June 2008.

On The Green Trail; Looking at My Hands; Small Night Song from Oneonta

**Journey (2008)**

For alto-saxophone and piano. This is truly a “song without words” as the permission for the poem was removed after the setting was done.

**A Wild Sostenuto (2008)**

To the poem “Fr C.” by Richard Wilbur. Available in 2 keys — one for high voice, one for low. The baritone version (with piano) was published in June 2008.

***The Scarlet Letter* (2008)**

Full length opera in 2 Acts, to libretto by poet David Mason

This opera uses a new libretto by poet David Mason, based on Nathaniel Hawthorne’s literary masterpiece.

The opera is about 2 hours long, and is scored for 3 main leads, 3 minor roles, a chorus, and assorted secondary roles. It is scored for chamber orchestra.

There are several stand-alone arias:

- “Beyond All Price” — Hester’s Lullaby (soprano)
- “This Canopy of Trees” — another aria for Hester (soprano)
- “Now Truly Know Me” — Chillingworth’s lament (baritone)
- “Our Nights” — (tenor)
- “Ye People of New England” — (tenor)
- “Come To The Devil’s Fire” – the Witch’s aria (mezzo-soprano)
- “Our Eden Here is Love” — (soprano and tenor duet)

Act I, Scene 2 from the opera will also be published separately, as a duet for baritone and soprano.

The choral sections of the opera will also be published independently.

***Dear Edna* (2009)**

For soprano with piano. This song cycle sets the famous poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay

–What Lips My Lips Have Kissed” – as well as 3 poems about Millay by the contemporary American women poets Jennifer Reeser, Diane Thiel and A.E. Stallings.

On An Album of Millay’s Recordings; What Lips My Lips Have Kissed; Editorial Suggestive (from a Twenty-First Century Editor); After Reading the Biography, Savage Beauty.

***Vedem: A Holocaust Oratorio and Vedem: The Song Cycle (2010)***

It is scored for boychoir, mezzo-soprano and tenor soloists, clarinet, violin, cello and piano. There is a separate song-cycle component, scored for the soloists with clarinet and piano accompaniment. The libretto intertwines the original poetry secretly published by the boys of Terezin with David Mason’s brilliant depiction of their lives. The poems are by Petr Ginz, Hanus Hachenburg, Zdenek Ornest, and Josef Taussig.

The oratorio contains the following songs:

The Transports; Memories of Prague; Home Number One; Five; Just A Little Warmth; In Terezin The Mind Was Free; Thoughts: Like Leaves About To Fall; Love In The Floodgates; We Were Alive, Approximately; A Model Ghetto; Farewell To Summer; We Were No Different Than You.

The song cycle contains the following songs:

Memories of Prague; Five; Thoughts; Love In The Floodgates; Farewell To Summer.

**The Act**

Poem is by H.L. Hix, and the piece is scored for soprano, tenor and piano.

**Todesfuge/Deathfugue**

Setting of Paul Celan’s Todesfuge (Deathfugue) in the original German as well as a translation by John Felstiner.

## **Ludlow**

Based on David Mason's verse-novel *Ludlow*. Laitman awaits funding for the music portion.

## **New Dickinson cycle in progress to commemorate my parents' 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary**

Two settings done:

Some Keep The Sabbath (2009), I Stepped from Plank to Plank (2010)

## APPENDIX B

### COMMERCIAL DISCOGRAPHY FOR LAITMAN'S SONGS

#### **CDs of Laitman's Compositions**

*Becoming a Redwood*. Featuring Jennifer Check, Patricia Green, Sari Gruber, Warren Jones, Juliette Kang, Thomas Kraines, Lori Laitman, Robert McPherson, Gary Poster, Lee Poulis, Barbara Quintiliani, Marcy Rosen, Randall Scarlata, and William Sharp. Albany Records, 2009. Available on Amazon and iTunes.

*Dreaming – The Songs of Lori Laitman*. Featuring Jennifer Check, Patricia Green, Sari Gruber, Warren Jones, Lori Laitman, Gary Karr, Randall Scarlata, and William Sharp. Albany Records, 2003. Available on Amazon and iTunes.

*Mystery – The Songs of Lori Laitman*. Featuring Phyllis Bryn-Johnson, Lori Laitman, William Sharp, and Lauren Wagner. Albany Records, 2000. Available on Amazon and iTunes.

*Within These Spaces*. Featuring Jennifer Check, Karyn Friedman, Amanda Gosier, Sari Gruber, Warren Jones, Lori Laitman, and Randall Scarlatta. Albany Records, 2009. Available on Amazon and iTunes.

#### **CDs that include Laitman's Composition(s)**

*American Song Recital*. Featuring Lauren Wagner and Frederick Weldy. Includes Laitman's *The Metropolitan Tower*. Channel Classics, 1993.

*Brundibar*. Featuring Maureen McKay and Laura DeLuca. Includes Laitman's *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, as arranged for soprano and clarinet. Naxos, 2007.

*Emily Dickinson in Song*. Featuring Virginia Dupuy. Includes Laitman's *If I . . .* and *They might not need me*. Gasparo, 2004.

*For a Look or a Touch*. Featuring Erich Parce, Amos Yang, and Mina Miller. Includes Laitman's *The Seed of a Dream* song cycle. Naxos, 2008.

*She Says*. Featuring Sonya Baker. Include five of six songs of Laitman's cycle *Days and Nights*. Sonya Gabrielle Baker, 2004.

*So Much Beauty*. Featuring Janeanne Houston. Includes Laitman's *Two Dickinson Songs*. Elmgrove Productions, 2004.

*Songs in Transit: An American Expedition*. Featuring Melanie Mitrano and Lori Laitman. Laitman's *Money* and *The Hour*. Capstone Records, 2006.

*Songs of Life*. Featuring Eileen Mager and John Friedeman. Laitman's *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* for soprano and bassoon. Naxos, 2008.

*The Shining Place*. Featuring Janeanne Houston. Includes two songs from Laitman's *The Metropolitan Tower* cycle. Elmgrove Productions, 2006.

*Unsleeping: Songs by Living Composers*. Featuring Patricia Green. Laitman's mezzo version of *Mystery*. Blue Griffin, 2009.

## APPENDIX C

### TRANSCRIPT OF E-MAIL INTERVIEWS WITH LORI LAITMAN

**September 4, 2010**

*Were there certain singers that made you want to write songs (besides the one that gave you your beginnings in art song, Lauren Wagner, and listening to your mother early on), and if so, who are they and why did they inspire you?*

I was woefully ignorant of singers and vocal literature before I started composing songs myself. So, Lauren was my chief inspiration in terms of singers. However, I was also very excited by the thought of “translating” poetry into music.

*Women say that when you become a mom, your perspective on life and what is important completely changes. Do you think your becoming a mother has had an effect on your writing?*

The demands of motherhood made it impossible for me to continue to compose music for film and theatre. So, in the 1980s, I concentrated on composing short chamber works. I began to compose songs in 1991 and immediately found my niche. The smaller scale of songs (as opposed to a larger art form) meshed well with the continuing demands of motherhood.

All of my children are wonderful musicians, and it’s been very interesting for me to watch them as they continue to grow musically. From birth, they all had a natural aptitude for music, more so than my natural aptitude.

Sharing a love of music with my children has been wonderful. They have always felt free to comment on my work, and often have given me great suggestions. They also continue to push me to grow. I try to create music that makes them proud of me. And, by the way, I also consider my songs (and other music) to be my “other children.”

*You have said that you think some of your innate ability to write for the voice comes from listening to your mother sing. Have you ever written anything for her, or with her voice in mind?*

I have composed songs as birthday gifts for my mother, but generally I have not intended for her to sing them. However, I just composed a birthday song for her 92nd birthday (which was July 14, 2010) – a setting of Emily Dickinson’s “I Stepped From Plank to Plank.” I purposely made it more limited in range, so that she would be able to sing it more easily. Darynn Zimmer and Ted Taylor will be premiering this little song on a concert on September 11, 2010 on Shelter Island in NY.

*As a fellow Interlochen alum, I have to ask, what was your experience there like, besides meeting the soprano that would later launch your song career?*

I attended Interlochen as a flutist, in between my sophomore and junior years of college. I studied composition that summer with George Wilson. I remember having fun writing an avant-garde

song to nonsense lyrics, and having Lauren Wagner perform this. Truthfully, I had no idea what I was doing.

The camp atmosphere was very competitive: I remember taking auditions for orchestral seating and being shocked that I was selected as principal flutist. I think the other flutists might have been equally shocked. In retrospect, I believe my technique was way more advanced than my musicianship at the time.

Lauren and I managed to get a church job on Sundays – I played the organ and she sang. I remember making some nice friends, driving to Traverse City and eating cherries, and meeting Lauren's boyfriend, Geoffrey Jacquez, who was later to become her husband. I missed my boyfriend that summer and remember writing a lot of letters to him. (He later became my husband).

*Do you think your compositional style has changed since you began writing art songs, and if so, in what way(s)?*

When I composed my first song, The Metropolitan Tower, I immediately thought it was on a different level than any of my previous work. The song came so easily to me that I doubted its worth, and almost threw it away, but my husband stopped me from doing so. I used to be embarrassed by this song, almost apologizing for its simplicity (even though I thought it was beautiful), because its lyric qualities ran counter to the prevailing "academic" style. I no longer am embarrassed by it and consider it one of my greatest songs.

Since I was such an intuitive composer, it was almost as if my style were completely formed from that first song on. In retrospect, I realize that much of my "process" stems from learning how to compose for film and theatre, in that I am seeking to create dramatic music to enhance the meaning of the words, in addition to trying to create a beautiful melody for singers to sing.

My process has remained relatively constant. I set the words first, with a bare-bones idea of the harmonies. In the first years, I didn't flesh out the accompaniment until the vocal line was completely done and I felt that it was perfect. This has changed slightly, and sometimes in addition to working on the melody, I might have more of an idea of the accompaniment than just the harmonies. I use the harmonies to color the emotions behind the words, and my meters typically still follow the natural rhythms of a poem. I always strive to have the accompaniment add another layer of interpretation to the text.

I try to keep my singers happy, and will always adjust the music to make them comfortable (within reason). For me, the drama of the situation is very important, and drama can often be accomplished in different ways. Sometimes the gesture is far more important than a particular note or notes, even though I have a very strong sense of what works best for a melody, and I also have a strong sense of an overarching melodic architecture within a song.

As I matured, I'd say that I use leitmotifs even more, not only within a song, but within a cycle. I view my songs as miniature operas, and these motives that unify the score often will take on



some psychological importance to further express the meaning of the words or understanding of a particular character.

*What inspired you to stray from the usual piano/voice combination for art song? Does your being a flutist have an effect on your writing for unusual combinations, i.e. voice and sax?*

Personal friendships led to the first pairing between saxophone and voice. I was not at all certain this would work without using piano. However, I was anxious to write something for Lauren Wagner and for Gary Louie, so that they could meet and work together.

Having taken that first step and learning that this could work, I continued on this path. Baritone Sanford Sylvan also encouraged me in this direction. Writing for voice with one other instrument is much easier for me than writing for voice with several instruments, but I am improving: the baptism of orchestrating my opera, *The Scarlet Letter*, has helped me with this.

*How long, in general, does it take you to write a song? Do certain poetic characteristics help the music to pour out faster?*

It varies from song to song. Sometimes the ideas for a song will flow out so quickly that I can barely get everything down on paper — *The Metropolitan Tower* was such a song, as were the last 3 songs in my cycle *Days and Nights*. Sometimes I can't get all the ideas down fast enough, which is frustrating.

For some reason, it's relatively easy for me to set Emily Dickinson to music, and sometimes I can draft a complete Dickinson song in a matter of minutes. Of course, when this happens, I always wonder whether it's any good, but I do it anyway, and figure that I can access its worth later on.

I try to follow the subtext of the poem while creating the melody. I also use word painting very frequently.

In the early days, I would get the ideas for the opening of a song pretty quickly and then sometimes it might take me months before I could figure out how to proceed. Such was the case with *I'm Nobody*, from *Four Dickinson Songs*.

Sometimes, when I hit a "brick wall," and I just cannot figure out how to proceed, it might take days or weeks to solve a problem. I do so by constant experimentation, singing lines this way and that way until it feels right. For *Holocaust, 1944*, I was continually singing — walking my dog, on a bus, driving, in the shower —

I think I wrote most of *Echo* in the shower (it was a difficult song).

Sometimes I go to sleep and think, "Ok, now I can start work." And I sleep for a little while, then I wake up and all the problem spots start spinning in my head. I got very little sleep when I was composing *Becoming a Redwood*, solving most of the problems during the middle of the night.

Often a solution will come when I am nowhere near music paper, and so I use a shorthand to put my thoughts down. I'm always scribbling on whatever paper or napkin is around. There's a good example of this up on my scarletletteropera.com site.

In general, however, I'm a pretty quick composer. I composed the music to my two-hour opera in 11 months (orchestrating it took an additional 4 months); my one-hour oratorio, Vedem, took 8 months to compose. The Seed of Dream took 9 months to compose.

Sometimes life interferes, and composing takes a lot longer than it normally would.

*Do you think you'll explore composing to text of any other languages besides English (and Yiddish)?*

I just finished my first dual language settings (English and German) of Paul Celan's Todesfuge, for baritone Wolfgang Holzmair.

I had the first ideas in Dec. of 2009, and because my life has been so hectic this year, I kept misplacing the manuscripts (although I could always reconstruct the first lines). I finally drafted the entire song again in June 2010, and finished the piece in August 2010.

It was an interesting experience. Some of the lines could be easily adapted to the German, but sometimes, when the grammatical structure was reversed, I found that I had to compose a different melody to suit the words. So the 2 settings are very similar, but there are differences.

And then the German setting informed the English setting, and I made some minor changes to the rhythms.

I would love to compose dual settings for other international singers as well.

*I've read in both Geihlsler's and Ilban's dissertations who some of your favorite composers are, both song and otherwise. Is there anyone that you've been listening to lately who has inspired or influence you and your work?*

I don't spend all that much time listening to music, as my time is so limited and I seem to always be up against a deadline. If I'm driving in the car, I find it too distracting to listen to classical music, so I listen to pop music instead. I love the close harmonies of Girlyman; I also love James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Carole King, Huey Lewis, and Bonnie Raitt, to name a few.

Lately, I have been listening to Natalie Merchant's Leave Your Sleep, and I love her song The Dancing Bear — I am amazed by the melodic construction of this Klezmer-type tune and cannot stop listening to it. I also love the music of Israeli composer Ofer Ben-Amots, which also has a lot of Klezmer elements. I guess I love Klezmer tunes!

I admire so many composers, but I'm not sure that they have much influence on me, as I have such an individual approach to composing. All of my musical ideas stem from the words themselves, and my desire to set them well for the singer and to create dramatic music to amplify their meanings. So other composers' techniques would really have no bearing on my approach.

*Is your song list up to date on the website, or is there anything else you're working on now that isn't up on the site just yet?*

It's almost up-to-date. The latest version should be up soon. I have finished The Act, finished Vedem and Todesfuge and have added another Dickinson song, I Stepped From Plank To Plank, to the cycle I am writing for my parents' birthday and 71st wedding anniversary. I have drafts for 2 more Dickinson songs to complete this cycle, although these may also be misplaced!

Currently I am trying to find the perfect poem or poems for a choral commission from Randolph College in Lynchburg, VA. This has been an interesting process. Finding the proper text for a chorus of college students is very different than finding the proper text for a solo singer. I am excited about composing for this medium, as it will be my first stand-alone choral piece. (I wrote for chorus in The Scarlet Letter and for boychoir in Vedem.)

*What is your total song count to date?*

205 songs.  
(I just put this into Excel and then managed to lose it all!)

*I think it's great that you offer different arrangements of some of your works, i.e. "Equations of the Light" for solo voice and piano and also in duet form. How did those different arrangements come about?*

I just thought that the pieces could work equally well as duets and as solo pieces. Dana Gioia had been the one to suggest that I set his poem as a duet.

*Do you find writing for voice and piano easier than writing for voice accompanied by another instrument, or do you prefer one over the other?*

I think there are different considerations when using just one other instrument. It's harder to maintain a sense of rhythmic stability, and I've learned over the years that it might be best to keep more of a constant meter so that the ear can maintain a sense of stability.

When writing for an instrument that you don't play, it's always good to consult with a player to make sure everything can work. So, in that way, using piano or flute for my songs is easier as I know how to play these instruments. Basically, however, it's always the same challenge: What can I do with the accompaniment to add another layer of interpretation to the text?

*I'm very curious about "Journey," but I know you probably can't delve too far into whatever happened. May I ask, though, if the alto sax was a part of the original plan or if it took the place of the voice?*

Regarding Journey: I had composed a wonderful song for a wonderful poem, at the request of the poet. For two years, I tried to play this song for the poet, but she was too busy to meet with me. So I decided I did not want to set any more of this poet's poems to music and told her so. She was very offended and immediately withdrew the permission for this poem. She did not even care to hear the song.

I was dismayed but mainly I felt sorry for the song itself, which could not be ~~born~~ as a song. I decided alto saxophone would work well as a substitute for the vocal line. It was not part of the original plan. The original song with words would have been my ideal.

*You use a mixture of the traditional Italian musical suggestions, i.e. “poco rit,” and markings such as “slow a bit” and “somewhat mysterious.” I like it. It seems as if you are not interested in the snobbish and formal end of the music world, but that you’d just like to get your idea across as easily as possible. Are there other reasons?*

Notation as it exists cannot really explain all the nuances that I would like. So I use whatever I can to try to explain myself to the performers. Since I’m American and speak English, English just seems to work better in many instances. My job is to get the music out of my head and onto the paper in the best way possible so that the performers can take it off the paper and get it back into the air. Over the years I have learned to be as specific as possible. In the beginning, I had assumed everyone would automatically know how I intended my music to be. This was not the case.

*You seem unafraid of setting poetry that has been set to music before. Do you ever listen or think of a previously set version of the poem in your composing?*

I think I was so ignorant of art song when I began composing, that I had no idea certain songs had been set many times. Perhaps I would have been intimidated had I realized how many times composers had set some of the same poems I have set. On the other hand, my composition process is so unique that ultimately, it doesn’t matter what someone else has done. It won’t have any effect on how I approach the poem. Each song is just my personal interpretation of the poem, as is every song for every composer.

Sometimes I’ve listened to another setting while in the middle of composing mine, but mostly I will do so after I’m done, if at all. The only composer I’ve ever heard that has set poems exactly as I would have is Gerald Finzi. When I listen to his songs, I understand exactly what he is doing, so I’m guessing his approach was similar to mine. The result seems to be similar, to my ears.

*Do you pick certain poetry that would seemingly be easier to compose for or do you feel like you could set any poetry to music? Is there a form that you seek out?*

I feel that I could set any poetry to music as long as I like the poem. Certain poems have favorable conditions for becoming a song. For example, it’s good if the poem isn’t too short or too long (although I’ve set both); it’s good if there’s a story line to follow; it’s good if it’s not too complex (because otherwise the audience will have a difficult time understanding the song); it’s good not to have homonyms (they can be confusing aurally), and it’s great if the poem has beautiful language and imagery. Poems about death and love or other very deep experiences often provide the most fertile ground for my imagination. Bad poetry provides the least, making it harder to create a beautiful song, although this can be accomplished. There is no form I seek out, only content.

*Do you find that modern or poetry by living writers works better for your compositions, or does it make no difference?*

I approach every poem in the same manner, using the same techniques. I have found I approach opera and oratorio the exact same way, although with these larger forms, the dramatic arc must necessarily be altered. I have more repetitions of the core musical materials than in a song.

*Are there any living poets you've discovered recently that you'd like to set?*

Yes. ....I have so many poems and poets that I'd like to set...here are a few : Diane Thiel, Jennifer Reeser and A.E. Stallings (whose poems I just set in my Dear Edna cycle); Cornelius Eady, and Gene Jones.

*I see in the music that it took a little less than 3 months to write Living in the Body. Is that a normal amount of time for setting a cycle? Did this cycle take you a longer or shorter time than usual to compose?*

Three months is just about average for this amount of music. It's always hard to predict how things will go, as life is unpredictable.

*You had said in an interview that you had some initial concerns about the sax being an accompaniment instrument in your cycles since saxophonists are used to taking the lead, but you thought it added to the haunting and mournful atmosphere you needed for I Never Saw Another Butterfly. Why did you choose the sax for Living in the Body? Are there other instrumental combinations for it that you considered for it?*

I was being commissioned to write specifically for voice and saxophone, so I did not consider any other combinations. It was nice to create another set for the same instruments as my Butterfly cycle but with the subject matter being so completely different. Perhaps because of my flute background, I find it relatively easy to compose for the saxophone.

*I read that Carolyn Bryan introduced you to Sutphen. Did she choose the poetry, or one of them and you picked the rest? Did you also know the soprano Sandra McClain?*

Carolyn knew Joyce and did introduce her work to me. I chose the poetry, and Joyce was able to come to the university for the premiere, so we got to meet each other, which was a real treat. I don't remember if Joyce also knew Sandra.

*What made you choose Living in the Body as the title of the set?*

That's a good question. I thought it was the most intriguing line from all of the poems, and I particularly love that poem. Carolyn and Sandra were not entirely thrilled by this title and suggested many others, but I thought this was most distinctive.

*How was the piece commissioned? Did it come from Carolyn Bryan?*

Yes. I had met Carolyn because she and Sandra had performed my *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. I can't remember exactly how Carolyn contacted me, but I remember she was coming to DC to perform, so we met over lunch and spoke about a possible commission.

*Did you attend the premiere, and were you happy with it?*

Yes, I attended the premiere and I was happy with it. This was back in 2002, and I was very excited to go to Georgia Southern University, as it was my first residency ever. The faculty performed a concert of my music, and I appreciated the chance to work with the faculty and students, and to be able to coach Carolyn and Sandra for this premiere. I made a few minor changes to the work based on their excellent suggestions during the rehearsal period.

*I think I understand why you omitted the last stanza of Sutphen's last poem "Crossroads." My interpretation is that she really doesn't know what the second half of her life will entail, and the ending is left open. Am I in the ballpark?*

That's a good explanation and one that I should adopt! However, the truth is that I didn't see the rest of the poem, it was on another page. And I didn't even notice this until Joyce and I were at the premiere. I was horribly embarrassed. However, Joyce herself told me that sometimes she's forgotten to read the end of the poem herself. I don't know if this is true, but it made me feel better.

*Each song ends with the first line repeated. Is this to bring it full circle for the listening audience both with text and motives, or are there other reasons?*

I felt doing so brought the song to a better close dramatically.

*Was there a certain poem that drew you to this set of texts?*

Burning The Woods of My Childhood and Living in the Body drew me in.

*Were you in contact with Joyce while writing the cycle?*

I had called her to introduce myself and we spoke on the phone a few times. We got along very well in Georgia and continue to stay in touch, via email and now Facebook. I admire her work enormously.

*What did Joyce think about your omitting the last lines of "Crossroads?"*

See above.

*Would you consider setting more of Joyce's poetry?*

There are several other poems of Joyce's that I have wanted to set for many years.

## September 9, 2010

*I opened an OPERA America brochure today at work and saw that you have an evening of your works being performed as part of their Salon Series on September 15. What other upcoming engagements do you have planned? Masterclasses? Residencies?*

Sept 19, 2010: I will be giving a presentation about my Holocaust oratorio Vedem at Yale's Institute for Sacred Music.

From Oct 21-28<sup>th</sup>, I will be the Guest Composer at The St. Petersburg Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia. I will be presenting concerts and master classes of my music with graduate students from The Peabody Institute of Music, as part of the International Conservatory Week Festival.

From Nov 3-5, 2010, I will be in residence at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA. The faculty will present an all –Laitman concert, and I will give a talk about my compositional process as well as conduct a master class for the student singers.

Feb 8-11, similar schedule, when I am in residence at Florida Gulf Coast University in Ft. Myers, FL.

March 14, 2011, Music of Remembrance will be performing The Seed of Dream.

April 25-29, 2011. Guest Composer at Randolph College in Lynchburg, VA. Masterclasses, a talk about my music and the premiere of a newly commissioned choral work.

May 1-2, 2011 (and possibly other dates as well): Vedem will be performed in Colorado Springs, CO

May 9, 2011: Music of Remembrance to premiere the song cycle version of Vedem.

I have been invited to do a residency at University of Minnesota but we have not yet finalized the dates.

*Do you usually compose at home, and was Living in the Body composed at home?*

Yes, I usually compose at home, unless I am in the middle of a cycle and traveling, in which case, I keep composing. This was composed at home.

*Gary Louie dropped out in mm. 12 and 13 in "Living in the Body" and came back in at the pickup to m. 14. Would you like it performed that way?*

I've done several revisions to the work, but am not sure I have entered these into the score. so I might have suggested that to him, I can't remember..

*I discovered that "Bring on the Rain" is not published. How did you find this poem?*

If it's not published, then Joyce gave it to me. I didn't remember that it wasn't published.

*How did you choose the order for Living in the Body? You have said that the first two poems that you set were the two that drew you in – did you choose the rest of the poems based off of those two?*

I always start with the first one and then decide which poem/song to work on next. I'm always looking to have a dramatic flow.

*You've transposed the cycle for mezzo but it is not yet published. Do you plan to publish it? How much lower are the pieces?*

I am not planning on publishing a mezzo version, because the pieces aren't transposed at all. What I have done is to create alternate notes for the mezzo that work within the existing framework. The conversion instructions are up on my site:

<http://artsongs.com/find/conversions>

*Did you intend for the singer and saxophonist to use a jazz style in "Bring on the Rain?"*

This was Karyn Friedman's interpretation and I loved it.

*What kinds of minor changes did you make to the cycle during the rehearsal period at Georgia Southern before the premiere?*

I can't remember exactly but I think I adjusted a bit of the vocal line to make sure the words could be heard. And in later rehearsals with other performers, I have opted to put in a few more rests here and there (perhaps that's what I told Gary Louie) in order to thin the texture a bit.



## APPENDIX D

### TRANSCRIPT OF E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH JOYCE SUTPHEN

**August 28, 2010**

*When did you decide you wanted to be a writer?*

I wrote a ~~novel~~ "when I was in the fifth grade; it was a very melodramatic cowboy story, which was confiscated by my teacher because I was inspired to write during math class. I kept writing.

*Did you grow up with religion/spirituality, and how does it compare to your feelings now about the matter?*

I grew up Catholic, went to Catholic schools for twelve years, and (later on) had various kinds of religious and spiritual experience. I am open to any perspective that emphasizes peace, love, and fairness for all.

*Are or were you married?*

I was married for about 25 years; I'm not married now.

*I read that you have three grown daughters – are any of them into writing or literature?*

My youngest daughter writes songs and sings. My oldest daughter thinks that she and I should collaborate on a best-selling series! They are all three voracious readers.

*On your Poetry Foundation website bio, you speak of music. Are you musical? Did you grow up with music? Is it a part of your life now?*

I grew up taking piano lessons and played alto sax for a couple of years in high school. My family is extremely musical: I have a sister who plays classical saxophone, two brothers who are band directors, and everyone in the family has played music in one way or another. My daughters all took Suzuki Violin (many years!) and then played various other instruments. I LOVE music—all kinds, all of the time!

*Do you enjoy teaching?*

VERY much so!

*Which facets of or happenings in your life have most inspired your works?*

Growing up in the country, being a part of a big extended family, my sister's death, the birth of my daughters, marriage and divorce, aging, mortality.

*What are you working on currently, in addition to your college teaching career?*

New poems, new collections of poems.

*What words would you use to classify or describe your poetry?*

Lucid, passionate, accessible, subtle

*Has your poetry been set by any other composers or songwriters?*

Libby Larson, Carol Jennings, Abbie Betinis, Arthur Maud (Trans. of Psalm 31, with Chris Brunelle).

*Were you in touch with Lori while she was composing music to your words?*

We did communicate back and forth.

*How does it feel to have someone choose your words to set to music? Were you pleased with the outcome?*

Wonderful, amazing—especially Lori! I was very pleased with the outcome.

*Did Lori's music introduce any new interpretations or find other meanings in your poetry?*

That's beyond my realm; I would be interested to know what people who'd read the poems on the page think hearing them performed.

*Your poems are published in groups in your books but Lori mixed and matched them to form her cycle. Do you feel like they go together well?*

Yes, I do.

*In "Living in the Body," the tone seems to change throughout. Was this planned when you began writing the poem or did it end up someplace different than you had in mind when you began it?*

Robert Frost's famous saying ("No surprise in the writer—no surprise in the reader") applies here. I didn't at all expect the poem to ~~end~~ up" where it did. I learned by following the words and letting what came next come.

*How did you feel about Lori omitting the last stanza of "Crossroads?" Do you think it changes the meaning of the poem, and to what degree?*

Oddly enough, I have omitted that stanza myself! It (the last stanza as printed in the book) puts the ~~cap~~" on things and tells what the narrator hopes the ~~second~~ half" will be, overall; without it, the poem is open; the listener can come to her own conclusion.

*Lori repeats the first lines in 4 of the 6 poems at the ends of her settings. Does this change the meaning or the overall mood of the poems?*

I think it adds to the meaning (emphasizes it, causes the hearer to linger, to stay with the thought in a more meditative way).

*Did you intend “Crossroads” to be interpreted as the second half of earthly life or the part that comes after life on earth?*

What an interesting question! (and I suppose that comment tips you off): I was thinking of the second half of an earthly life, but there is no reason it couldn't be otherwise. I like that idea a lot!

*Can you tell me the name of the poet friend who was involved with your becoming a poet, and with whom you shared a poetry prize at the University of Minnesota?*

Susan Yuzna. I don't think she would mind my saying, but I must say that I haven't talk with Susan for many years. We went to high school together and have only seen each other a few times since then—but it's true that we did sit together at an art museum and agreed that we would like to be poets.

*Regarding your Fourteen Sonnets, are there only 151 in print and you signed 36 of them, or have you signed all 151?*

I really don't remember how many copies I signed—and I assume there are only 115 copies (of the soft-cover) in print. I'm not sure how many of the deluxe were printed.

*What inspired you to print so few of Fourteen Sonnets? Do you plan to print more? It's a beautiful book!*

All of that was / is completely up to the publisher (Red Dragonfly Press).

*Laitman admitted to not having seen the last stanza of “Crossroads” when she set the piece. Did you choose to omit it before or after she did? If you reprinted or republished “Crossroads,” would you change it? I love the poem either way (it may be my favorite of the ones used in the cycle), which is why I'm so curious!*

I actually never omitted that last stanza in print; it was published in *\*Straight Out of View\** with the last stanza—and has been reprinted on websites with the stanza. I think I will always include that last stanza—but I also like it without it.

## APPENDIX E

### TRANSCRIPT OF PHONE INTERVIEW WITH CAROLYN BRYAN

**September 9, 2010**

*Laitman says that you introduced her to Joyce Sutphen's works. How do you know Sutphen?*

Joyce and I met as new faculty at Gustavus Adolphus College. We were both visiting lecturers with one year appointments at the time – she moved into a tenure track position while I was on a one year replacement appointment. I hadn't spoken with her in quite a while, but I really admired her work and contacted her to discuss using the poetry for a song cycle.

*Laitman really enjoyed her residency at Georgia Southern, and said she was able to coach you and Sandra during the rehearsal period. How was it to work directly with her? Did she change anything per your request?*

Sandra probably remembers better than I do, but Lori is very clear about what she has in mind, and is a great composer.

*Do you have any suggestions for the saxophonist regarding balance issues throughout the pieces?*

As Sandra said, experiment with position of the saxophonist in relation to the singer. We have experimented with placing a scarf over the bell of the horn to absorb sound. We have also used a mute in the past. I've heard Sandra fill a hall many times, so it still surprises me when I can drown her out with my instrument! The more you can get into the hall and have someone listen, the better.

I've noticed that I'm very tired after playing this cycle – a different kind of tired due to the control it takes to hold back dynamically.

At the world premiere (North American Saxophone Alliance at UNT 2002), Sandra and I just had to walk out and perform it without having ever tried it in the hall. You really have no idea what the hall will do to the balance.

*So the actual premiere of the piece was at UNT and not Georgia Southern?*

Correct. We had open rehearsals and coachings with Lori at Georgia Southern, but it was not the polished performance.

*Where does this cycle stand on the difficulty scale for the saxophonist? Are there certain moments or pieces that are particularly challenging?*

The piece is not as technically challenging for the sax player as much as putting it together with the vocalist and dealing with balance issues. I think I sweat the most over "Bring on the Rain!"

It has a flute-like quality in the writing (and Lori is a flutist) that makes it a little difficult. We made a few adjustments to the tempo in that piece though so that Sandra could get the words out.

*Have you assigned the cycle to any of your students?*

No, I haven't, much for the same reason as Sandra hasn't either – there aren't any undergraduate singers here who have the chops for it. I did assign a movement of "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" though – the singer was quite young, but it went well.

*How did the commission work?*

It was funded by a Special Initiative Grant from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at Georgia Southern. I had become acquainted with Lori's work while I was writing my dissertation on voice and sax works, I put out a call for works and she replied with *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. The grant funded the commission of the work as well as Lori's residency and travel to the conference in Texas for the premier.

*When and where have The Arden Duo's subsequent performances taken place?*

On Thursday March 7, 2002, 9:40 AM, the Living in the Body premier took place at the North America Saxophone Alliance Biennial Conference, University of North Texas. To be exacting, the program book does not say "world premier." On the other hand, there was no printed program for the reading on Monday March 4. A subsequent performance took place at the World Saxophone Congress XIII, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN on Friday July 11, 2003 at 3:00 PM.

## APPENDIX F

### TRANSCRIPT OF E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH SANDRA MCLAIN

**September 9, 2010**

*I know that Carolyn Bryan knew of Joyce Sutphen's works before the commission – did you know of her poetry as well?*

No, Carolyn introduced me to the poetry, and I came to love it. Joyce is a wonderful, warm human being and her poetry reflects that. She was able to attend our performance in Minnesota.

*Did you meet Dr. Bryan at Georgia Southern?*

Yes, she came there to work after I had already been there for about 5 years and we became great friends and collaborators.

*Could you please tell me a bit about The Arden Duo? When was it formed? What other composers' works have you performed?*

We formed the Duo at GSU when we wanted to perform another of Lori's works, "Never Saw another Butterfly." We then got the idea (and a grant) to commission a work of our own from Lori. Our most recent commission was written by Dr. Stuart Glazer of Florida Atlantic University. The set is "Vices from the Holocaust" and is a cycle of three songs based on poems of holocaust survivors. They are very sensitively written and are wonderful pieces. We premiered them in March, 2010, at the University of GA for the North American Saxophone Alliance and will do the international premiere this November 5 at FAU in conjunction with the conference "Lessons and Legacies of the Holocaust."

Our most recent bio: The Arden Duo formed in 1998 and has performed at the World Saxophone Congress, meetings of the North American Saxophone Alliance, and the Festival of Women Composers International. They also were featured on "A Celebration of Women in Music" at Mary Baldwin College and in conjunction with "Weavings of War" at Florida Atlantic University. Lori Laitman, Carolyn Jennings, Randall Reese, Bill Schmid, and Stuart Glazer have written original works for the Arden Duo.

*Laitman really enjoyed her residency at Georgia Southern, and said she was able to coach you and Dr. Bryan during the rehearsal period. How was it to work directly with her? Did she change anything per your request?*

It is always an interesting process to work with a composer on a premiere performance, since the composer's and the performer's experiences are both a "first." It is helpful knowing what was in the composer's mind when certain passages were written or how certain melodies happen to grow out of the poetry. Lori shares that information freely with the performers. For the most part, Lori did not alter passages. She would allow for some interpretive room but had a very definite idea of her own concept of the pieces and the way she felt they should be performed.

*Do you have any suggestions for regarding balance issues throughout the pieces? Do you find this to be an issue at all for any voice/sax combinations you have performed?*

Balance is ALWAYS an issue with voice and saxophone, especially the alto sax, for which most things are written. The sax pretty much wins ~~hands~~ down.” As you can imagine, the areas where the voice is in a lower register or in the same register with the sax are the most difficult. The easiest places to balance are when the soprano is in the upper range.

Depending on the hall in which we are performing, we have done a number of things to affect the balance and try to make my sound more present without forcing the vocal quality. We find that positioning ourselves certain ways, sometimes with me more out front or with Carolyn turned so that she is not playing directly out to the audience, tends to work the best. We have even hung fabric from Carolyn’s stand in very live halls to absorb some sound. She has also put fabric in the bell of the horn at times when necessary to mute the sound (we have a ~~special~~ scarf”). Every hall is different, but there are always balance considerations. The sax player has to have excellent dynamic control in order to hold back the sound when the issues arise. Balance in recordings is also an issue and microphones have to be very well-placed for recordings to be satisfying (and where you can hear the singer!).

*How would you rate this piece regarding its level of difficulty? Are there certain moments or pieces that were particularly challenging for you?*

From the singer’s point of view, the work is at a moderately-difficult-to-difficult level for several reasons. The technique required to adjust dynamically is one issue. The soprano has to have a well developed low-middle register in order for the poetry to speak. The rhythmic constructs also present a challenge. The most difficult ones from that respect are ~~Bring on the Rain~~” and ~~Living in the Body~~.” From a vocal standpoint, the most challenging was ~~Not for Burning~~” which is very aria-like in its passion and range extremes and takes good stamina from the singer. In terms of notes, there are tricky places in all of them until one gets them really established. The collaboration from the two members of the ensemble has to be intricate for the pieces to be effective and takes a great amount of time.

*When and where have you performed this cycle besides the Georgia Southern premiere in 2002?*

University of North Texas (Denton, Texas) for the North American Saxophone Alliance and on the 13th World Saxophone Congress at the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis).

*Have you assigned the cycle to any of your students?*

No, because of the level of difficulty. Where I have taught since the cycle was written, I have often not had students at the proper level of technique to perform them. They require at least very advanced senior, but preferably graduate student to accomplish the work of the whole cycle. Some of the songs might work separately for singers at the level of a well prepared college junior or senior. The other issue is that there must be a very accomplished saxophonist at hand who has

the technique and is willing to put in the kind of work and time that such an ensemble piece requires.



APPENDIX G

LETTER OF PERMISSION

Dear Ms. Laitman,

As you know, I am completing my doctoral dissertation at Louisiana State University entitled "A Performance Guide to Lori Laitman's *Living in the Body*." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the following:

Laitman, Lori. *Living in the Body*. ©2002 by Lori Laitman, Potomac, MD. Published by Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI. All Rights Reserved.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Kathryn Drake

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

Lori Laitman

Lori Laitman

Date 10/7/10

## APPENDIX H

### LETTER OF PERMISSION

September 27, 2010

Dear Dr. Sutphen,

As you know, I am completing my doctoral dissertation at Louisiana State University entitled "A Performance Guide to Lori Laitman's *Living in the Body*," set to six of your poems. I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the following:

Burning the Woods of My Childhood  
Living in the Body  
Not for Burning  
Lost at Table  
Bring on the Rain  
Crossroads

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of the material in any other form by you or others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Kathryn Drake

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:



Joyce Sutphen

Date: 10/07/2010

## APPENDIX I

### LETTER OF PERMISSION

October 11, 2010

Dear Mr. Perlman,

I am completing my doctoral dissertation at Louisiana State University entitled "A Performance Guide to Lori Laitman's *Living in the Body*," set to six of Joyce Sutphen's poems. Five of these poems are published by Holy Cow! Press. I've received permission from Joyce Sutphen to reprint her work, and she suggested that I contact you as well. I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the following:

Burning the Woods of My Childhood (Straight Out of View by Joyce Sutphen)  
Living in the Body (Straight Out of View by Joyce Sutphen)  
Not for Burning (Coming Back to the Body by Joyce Sutphen)  
Lost at Table (Coming Back to the Body by Joyce Sutphen)  
Crossroads (Straight Out of View by Joyce Sutphen)

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of the material in any other form by you or others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

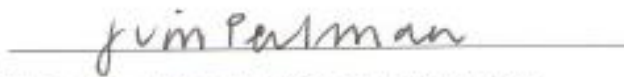
If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,



Kathryn Drake

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:



Jim Perlman, Editor and Publisher, Holy Cow! Press

Date: 10 / 15 / 10

## VITA

Kathryn Drake is a native of Big Rapids, Michigan. She received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance at the University of Michigan, studying under soprano Shirley Verrett. Kathryn earned her Master's of Music in Voice Performance at Louisiana State University, where she studied with Professor Patricia O'Neill. Recent performances include the soprano solo in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Acadiana Symphony, the role of Juliette in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* with LSU Opera, and the soprano solo in the Brahms *Requiem* with the Memphis Symphony under the baton of Dr. Kenneth Fulton. She was the soprano soloist in the Fauré *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah* with Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, and sang the roles of Pamina in *The Magic Flute* and The Sandman in *Hansel and Gretel* with Opéra Louisiane. Other opera credits include Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Violetta in *La Traviata*, Laetitia in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and Anne Stanton in *Willie Stark* (on DVD by Newport Classic, Ltd).